

MIDLANDS

THE UK'S BIGGEST REGIONAL GAY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

ZONE

THE ESSENTIAL NIGHTLIFE
+ CLUBBING GUIDE

ISSUE 215 £1.80 MARCH 2015

INSIDE

JASON MANFORD

WE TALK TO THE FUNNY
MAN ABOUT HIS ROLE IN
THE PRODUCERS

BIRMINGHAM BULLS

WE TALK HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT
WITH THE BRUM RUGBY TEAM

PRIDE IN SPORT

THE LGBT SPORTS FESTIVAL
RETURNS TO BRUM

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PRIDE CARNIVAL
PARADE GETS THE
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BEAUTIFUL THING

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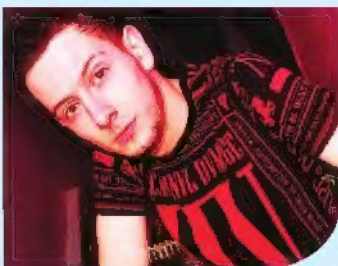
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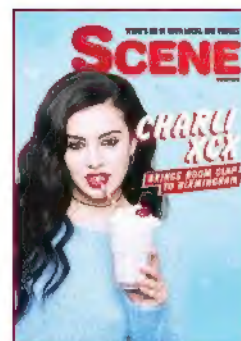
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The Editor's Note

Ryan Humphreys @ryanhumphreys

We're heading into Spring, and that means it's time for us to present to you - the March edition of Midlands Zone magazine!

We've got another great issue for you this month, starting off with an interview with ex-EastEnders Thomas Law (who played Peter Beale) about the hit gay play Beautiful Thing. You may have seen the film version of it, which was great, but many people don't realise that the play came first - and it's now been revived for an anniversary tour. We also talk to comedy king Jason Manford about his role in the upcoming production of The Producers. Then we turn our attention to the sporty side of life, taking a look at the Birmingham Bulls rugby team and the upcoming Pride In Sport festival.

And, of course, there's all the usual Scene events news and round-ups, not to mention our guides to the hottest gadgets, fashion and homeware. Enjoy!

And the winner is...



You've been voting over the past month in your thousands, and now it's time for us to reveal the much-deserved winners in the Midlands Zone Readers' Awards!

From Best Gay Bar, Best Gay Club and Best LGBT Event to Best Cabaret Act and many more, there are plenty of people and venues out there that deserve recognition. And that's where you lot came in.

We're delighted to announce that we're hosting a special awards ceremony on Friday 20 March at The Nightingale Club in Birmingham, where we'll be announcing the winners live on stage. We'll also be showcasing some fantastic live entertainment. And to wrap it all up, there'll be some great after-parties to enjoy across the city's vibrant and diverse gay village. It's free to attend and doors open at 7pm, so make sure you pop along and see if your vote counted! It's set to be a great night, and I look forward to seeing you all there.

49,000 pardons, please!

It's good to see that the family of codebreaker Alan Turing have been to Downing Street to demand the pardons of 49,000 other men who, like Alan, were persecuted for their homosexuality.

Turing's work cracking the German military codes in the Second World War was vital to the British war effort, but in 1952, he was convicted for gross indecency with a 19-year-old man. He was chemically castrated, and later died from cyanide poisoning.

In 2013, he was given a posthumous royal pardon - and now campaigners want the government to pardon all the men convicted under the same outdated law.

Turing's pardon was right and proper; it's unjust and illogical that everyone else convicted of the same 'offence' hasn't been given the same justice. Hopefully the government will see sense and these convictions will be overturned sooner rather than later.



Charity needs you!

Last month, Birmingham's very own gay charity, Birmingham LGBT, asked for donations towards the running of its Health and Wellbeing Centre - more commonly known as the Birmingham LGBT Centre.

This fantastic resource is such a treasure for the city's LGBT community and costs £633 per day to run. The centre is hugely valuable, as it provides a central hub for all, providing a range of much-needed services - from wellbeing awareness to older-people support. It also acts as a meeting place for community groups and provides sexual health services.

It would be a shame to see these services for our community disappear, so if you can donate anything to help the upkeep of the Centre, please do so. Visit www.blgbt.org to make a donation.

Put pen to paper...

Finally, we're on the look out for creative and passionate writers to pen a monthly column for Midlands Zone magazine, both in print and online. This is a great opportunity for your work to be viewed by over 50,000 readers across the country. Get in touch if you think you've got what it takes!

Ryan x

What's Hot!

Gaga Gets Engaged!



We were delighted to see that the Queen of Pop herself, Lady Gaga, has accepted a proposal of marriage from her boyfriend, Taylor Kinney. The star was treated to an enormous heart-shaped diamond ring!

Chinese coming-out film becomes viral sensation



Check out the short film that's become massive on the internet, depicting the coming out of a Chinese man to his parents. So far it's been viewed over 100 million times. You can watch the video online here:

What's Not!

Glee is over!



Glee wrapped up filming on its final series last month. It's been going strong for six seasons and has paved the way for many hit singles. More importantly, though, its pioneering storylines have really helped the LGBT community. The show will be sorely missed.

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THE MAKING



Jon Ingram

Duty Manager
The Nightingale, Birmingham

Born: **Birmingham**

Star sign: **Pisces**

Age: **23**

Each month we take a look at someone from the Midlands LGBT community. This month our focus turns on Jon Ingram, a manager at Birmingham's popular Nightingale Club

About Jon

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Lee Bank. It's literally a stone's throw from the Birmingham gay scene.

Single or attached?

I've been in a relationship with my partner Jack for a few years now.

What makes you happy?

I grew up with a huge family and we spent all our time together. As I've got older and my job role's changed, I hardly see them - so when I do meet up with them, that's what makes me happy. Especially my nephew.

What makes you sad?

I don't really get sad. I'd say more disappointed - with fake people who're out for what they can get from you.

What makes you angry?

At work I'm very rarely angry, but at home I erupt all the time. Mostly at poor Jack! Also, people not appreciating the hard work venue staff do to make sure they have the best experience on their night out.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

It would have to be my inability to say no to a drink after work! The Village Underground has a lot to answer for with my hangovers on a Sunday.

What's been the most embarrassing thing you've done in your life?

I don't get embarrassed... I have

absolutely no shame.

Now that same-sex marriage has been legalised, would you consider getting married?

I love the fact we can get married now. It means I can now be as miserable as my dad!

Coming Out

When did you first know you were gay?

I know everyone says it, but I've always known. There was that phase we all go through saying we're bisexual, but I think that was the nicer way to dump a girlfriend.

When did you come out?

I came out at school, at the age of 13. I had a girlfriend at the time. I went to a house party with my best mate and ended up kissing him all night. Everybody knew about it in school by the Monday. Needless to say, it was a very awkward conversation when dumping the girlfriend.

What was school like for you as a gay teenager?

After I came out, school didn't really change. I was still the same person. I didn't act any differently so wasn't treated any differently. I think it helped that I came out in 2004. Being gay had started to be acceptable.

Who was the first person you told you were gay, and what was their reaction?

I told my cousin and her girlfriend at the time that I was bisexual. She turned around and told me to shut up, and that there was no way I liked girls!

What would you say to a youngster trying to come to terms with their own sexuality?

I don't think there's any need to say anything now. The UK is so much more accepting now, kids are coming out all the time.

Have you ever had any experiences with the opposite sex?

Never! I'm very proud of being a 'gold star gay'.

Your Career

When you were younger, what did you want to be?

I always said I wanted to run my own gay club. I even based my ICT GCSE on it.

What was your first job after leaving school?

I started working in my family's local bar from the age of 13, as bar support. The landlady trained me in the cellar.

What attracted you to working on Birmingham's gay scene?

I'm very proud of being gay, and I grew up over the road from the scene, so it was only natural I gravitated towards it. I love the people who work on it - there are so many different personalities.

What was your first job on Birmingham's gay scene?

I started at Route 2 as a cloakroom attendant, and worked on the bar a few months before it closed down. When it did close, The Nightingale came in, took its Monday nights and brought the staff with them. I've never looked back.

You're part of the management team at The Nightingale. How do you find your job?

I love my job! I came in at the age of 18 as bar staff and have worked my way up. It has some of the best and worst moments for me, but I love every minute I'm there.

What are the highlights of working at The Nightingale?

For me, it's the staff, as it's so big we have a lot of them. The banter from them is the best. They're all hard working and amazing. I go home smiling after every shift.

What challenges do you face when working there?

You can plan down to the smallest detail, but if you're not reactive, you won't last. People drinking can be very unpredictable, so you can only plan for so much.

What have you got coming up at The Nightingale?

I'm really looking forward to our future with So It Goes. Everything's looking very good with what's coming up. And, as I said, I have no shame - on Sunday 15 March, I have my all-day birthday rave, so I hope to see as many customers there as possible!

Obviously Birmingham Pride is a busy time for the venue - do you enjoy it?

This year will be my sixth Pride at the club, and I've enjoyed every one. It's hard work, but it's great seeing all the staff pulling together and keeping each other going.

Gay Scene

How long have you been frequenting the Midlands gay scene and what's your earliest memory?

My cousin let me go along to Birmingham Pride with her when I was 13 and I fell in love with it. When I was 16 I managed to get into The Nightingale. I was well chuffed - till I met my now-Head of Security. Shaf spotted me after about ten minutes and I was straight out. To this day I like to remind her she threw me out!

Who's your favourite cabaret act on the gay scene?

I love Marty and Penny, but my favourite is Pam Catz. I met her on my 18th birthday in Route 2 when she lobbed an Easter egg at me from the DJ box... It was a display of love, I'm sure.

Who's your favourite person on the gay scene?

I've got loads! Andy and Hilli from The Fox, Lawrence and Lotty - of course - but my favourites are Darren Bayliss and Tom Haddon. They manage The Loft Lounge and The Nightingale. We came up together through the company. And my best mate, Dorris, from The Village Inn. They're all like my big brothers.

What do you most enjoy about the gay scene?

I love the fact I get paid to host a constant party. It's the people who come out that makes it all come together.

What have you noticed about the way the gay scene's changed over the years?

I think the gay community has fallen in love with urban music. The Village Underground and Room 4 at The Nightingale are rammed every Saturday night.

How would you change the Midlands' gay scene?

Why would you change something that works? The scene always has people on it. Standing on the front door of the club, I see new people coming every week for their first experience.

Time Out

Where do you like to go on a night out?

I always try and avoid the club, but it never works. I'm drawn to it every night. I love going to The Fox, The Village Inn, Club Chic and The Loft Lounge. I'm unfortunate in that my partner and all my mates work on the scene, so there's never a night that we're all off together.

What do you do to relax?

I don't relax. If I'm not working, I'm out partying. I treat life like one long party - you're only here once, so you might as well enjoy it!

What do you enjoy on telly?

I don't really watch TV, as I work the nights when anything decent is on. So I got to love my Netflix account! RuPaul's Drag Race is always what I go for when I have spare time. I love it, and can't wait for when they're coming up at the club. I'm going to be like a big kid on Saturday 14 March when Haus of Edwards are performing at the Gale.

**What was the last album or track you bought?**

I don't really buy music. The last album I was given was Felton's So It Goes.

Which one website do you spend the most time on?

Facebook - it's an addiction!

Which type of holiday do you prefer?

I love a party island holiday. All I need is my mates, the sun and plenty of beer.

Quickfire

Who's your favourite actor?

Joanna Lumley.

What's your favourite book?

The Harry Potter series.

Half empty or half full?

Half full!

What's your favourite food?

My Aunt Denise's coddle.

And how about your favourite drink?

My family are Irish, so I drink anything!

Madonna or Lady Gaga?

Neither.

Gaydar or Grindr?

Neither.

If you could take a selfie with one person, alive or dead, who would it be?

Freddie Mercury.

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What's On
MAGAZINE GROUP

THE UK'S LARGEST REGIONAL
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We endorse the recycling of our magazine and would encourage you to pass it on to others to read when you have finished with it.

PRIDE 80s gay legend announced as Birmingham Pride gives the green light for Carnival Parade

Birmingham Pride organisers have confirmed that an '80s gay legend is the first main artist to be announced for the two-day LGBT festival in May.

With preparations well under way to finalise the entertainment line-up for this year's festival, the first major artist to be announced is **Jimmy Somerville**, who has actively supported and campaigned for LGBT rights throughout his career.

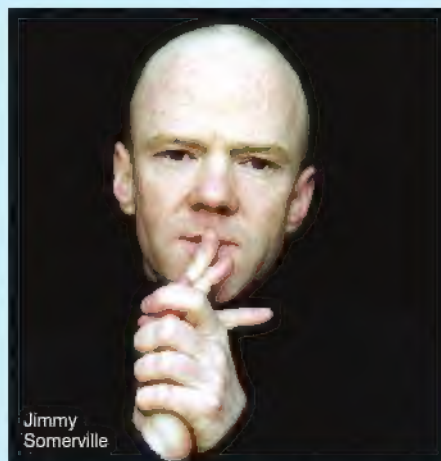
Somerville came to prominence in the 1980s with the band Bronski Beat, whose openly gay lyrics were groundbreaking at the time.

Somerville recently featured on the soundtrack to the hugely successful LGBT-interest film, *Pride*, which highlighted the unusual coming together of two communities - the gay community and the mining community - both of whom were oppressed during the Thatcher era of the 1980s.

Commenting on *Pride* 2015, Festival Director Lawrence Barton said: "We're really excited by the list of artists we're planning for this year's Main Stage and Dance Arena, but it's fantastic that, at this early stage, we've secured the legendary Jimmy Somerville. For some, Bronski Beat provided the soundtrack to their lives at a time when being gay was far harder and less acceptable than it is now. Jimmy's involvement provides us with a fantastic opportunity to revisit the hard-won fights of the '80s and '90s, as well as bringing to everyone's attention the struggles that still remain."

Organisers have also confirmed that despite recent budget cuts by the City Council, the event's high-profile parade around the city centre will still go ahead.

This year's Carnival Parade will leave Victoria Square at 12 noon on the Saturday, taking its usual



Jimmy Somerville

route through the city to the gay village. The theme for Birmingham Pride 2015 is 'Freedom - Together United', in recognition of how much more can be achieved by coming together.

With thousands of people taking advantage of *Pride*'s 'Early Buy' tickets last month, the second

wave of discounted tickets will be priced at £14 (day only) and £20 (weekend).

These can be purchased from www.birminghampride.com or by calling the Ticketsellers on 0844 870 0000.

Birmingham Pride takes place on Saturday 23 and 24 May.

HATE CRIME Praise for swift response from police following homophobic tweet in Shropshire

The Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival received a homophobic and threatening tweet after posting that their Market Drayton screening of the film *Big Eden* was two hours away.

"The tweet was not only unpleasant and insulting, it also contained what we saw as a veiled threat to the Festival Drayton Centre and our audience," said the film event's organisers, "so we contacted Twitter and the police."

The tweet read: 'Have fire extinguishers ready. If it is a cocksucker's event, it will be burns (sic) night, if it is Lizard Licking you might be ok.'

"The police were very supportive, seeing it as very serious," said the organisers. "They arrived at the venue shortly after us, took a statement and hung around for a while."

The person who wrote the message, a 45-year-old man from Wellington, has been arrested.

A decision to prosecute was taken and the man has since admitted a guilty plea.

The organisers were very pleased with the police's response and the swift decision to press charges.

FAMILY Home Office blocks Nottinghamshire lesbian from living with her US-based partner in the UK

Devoted couple Sophie Doyle and Jojo Bowden are heartbroken after discovering they will have to live more than 4,000 miles apart - because Sophie doesn't earn enough money.

The Nottingham Post reports: "The pair, who are in a same-sex relationship, fell in love after meeting online. But as Jojo lives in West Virginia in the United States, while Sophie lives in Ilkeston, Nottinghamshire, spending time together has proven difficult."

"To solve the problem, Jojo decided to apply for a visa to come and live in England - but the couple soon discovered it wouldn't be as simple as they'd hoped."

Sophie said: "After I met Jojo online, I flew out to America to meet her and we got on really well. It was like a whirlwind, and we knew straight away we wanted to be together. As soon as I came back we started looking into applying for a visa, and found out that I would have to earn more than £18,600 for Jojo to be eligible for a visa. I couldn't believe it. We haven't applied because we know it would be pointless."

"Sophie, who works part-time as a customer services advisor for bus company Trentbarton, earns considerably less than £18,600. This minimum threshold was introduced by the Home Office in 2012 to "prevent burdens on the UK taxpayer".

ARTS Birmingham's SHOUT Festival receives £47,000 'vote of confidence' from Arts Council

Organisers of Birmingham's SHOUT Festival have announced that the event will receive a £47,555 investment for development and programming.

The investment follows a successful application by SHOUT to Arts Council England's National Lottery-funded Grants For The Arts programme.

The new funding, which runs until Autumn 2016, allows SHOUT to recruit a part-time worker who will oversee its organisational development and programming activity.

The SHOUT Steering Group

said: 'We are thrilled to receive this latest vote of confidence from Arts Council England for SHOUT's work. This funding allows us to really focus on developing SHOUT as an entity. It enhances our ability to carry out partnership working and to continue programming LGBT arts within the region.'

SHOUT will be seeking to have its new co-ordinator in post by mid-Spring, with the sixth Festival of Queer Arts &



LGBT Culture taking place in November.

For more information about SHOUT Festival, visit www.blgbt.org.

NATIONAL NEWS

POLITICS Alan Turing family demands government gives pardons to 49,000 convicted gay men

The family of codebreaker Alan Turing has visited Downing Street to demand the government pardons 49,000 other men persecuted like him for their homosexuality.

The Scotsman reports: 'Turing, whose work cracking the German military codes was vital to the British war effort, was convicted in 1952 for gross indecency with a 19-year-old man, was chemically castrated, and two years later died from cyanide poisoning in an apparent suicide. He was given a posthumous royal pardon in 2013, and campaigners want the government to pardon all the men convicted under the outdated law.'

HEALTH AIDS charity urges government to close current HIV funding gap

Not enough money is being spent on HIV prevention to have any impact on the rate of new HIV infections, a report by the National AIDS Trust (NAT) has found.

NAT estimates in 2014/15 that £15million was spent nationally on HIV prevention compared with £55million allocated in 2001/02. In this time the number of people living with HIV has trebled whilst the amount spent on prevention has decreased to less than a third of the original budget.

This estimate is based on information provided to NAT from local authorities in England with a high prevalence of HIV. £10million was spent in 2014/15 on HIV prevention in these areas - this works out at only 70p per person.

The report found that in local authorities with high prevalence of HIV, only 0.1% of local authority public health allocation is spent on HIV prevention.

In 2013 the NHS spent 55 times more on HIV treatment and care in these areas than local authorities spent on HIV prevention.

The lifetime costs of HIV treatment and care for someone with HIV is £361,000.

CRIME New campaign launched to combat hate crime in the West Midlands region

A campaign has been launched after a rise in reported levels of hate crime in the West Midlands.

The Birmingham Mail reports: 'Latest government figures revealed a total of 4,883 incidents were recorded in the region in 2013/14 - an increase from 4,442 the year before.'

The Mail continues: 'Offences against transgender people had risen by 135 per cent,

numbering 47 incidents. Small rises were also recorded in the number of incidents relating to sexual orientation - with 371 cases reported - and disability, with 176 cases.'

'Hate crime can be motivated by race, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. Victims may be subjected to physical assaults or suffer damage to their property. They may also

experience the threat of an attack or verbal abuse.

'Independent charity Crimestoppers urged victims to report any form of hate crime, in a bid to stamp out the problem.'

'Anyone with information about hate crime can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or through the Anonymous Online Form at www.crimestoppers-uk.org

HATE CRIME Birmingham LGBT joins 30 other gay organisations to tackle hate crime

Birmingham LGBT has joined 30 other LGBT organisations from across England and Wales to tackle hate crime.

PinkNews.co.uk reports: 'The LGBT Consortium has launched an initiative to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime, with the aim being to increase the reporting of LGBT hate crimes and to improve the support available to those targeted.'

'The initiative is funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Organisations involved include the Lesbian and Gay Foundation, Metro, OUTreach Liverpool, Galop and Birmingham LGBT.'

'It will work across England and Wales and will focus on rural areas and the needs of

local areas.

'According to the Consortium, an estimated 35,000 anti-LGBT hate crimes go unreported each year. Organisers feel that by increasing the number of incidents reported, the crimes will be easier to tackle.'

'The Crime Survey of England and Wales recorded 39,000 homophobic and transphobic incidents, but just 4,500 were reported to the police.'

'The project, which will last for 14 months, aims to empower through campaigns and information resources.'

'It will set up buddying relationships between organisations and fund advisors, and set up systems to help people report the crimes.'

'Paul Roberts, Chief Executive at LGBT Consortium, said: "This is our opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of LGBT people and communities who find themselves victims of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crimes and incidents. We are proud to be working with so many of our members and the EHRC on this project."

'Equality and Human Rights Commissioner Evelyn Asante-Mensah said: "Everyone in Britain should feel confident and sufficiently empowered to recognise and report incidents of hatred, hostility and harassment, and yet we know that for LGBT people this is very often not the case."

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THE VIRAL ROUND-UP

Here's what we've been looking at online...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often, we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!

WATCH THIS! The best video we've been watching this month...



One of the big hitters in the underwear industry is Emporio Armani. Last month they unveiled their new campaign, featuring uber-hot DJ Calvin Harris. After the release of the pictures, the Internet went into meltdown. Check out the behind-the-scenes video: youtu.be/ztA2b7LjdXU

CHECK THIS OUT! Praise the lord! A sexy dance video for Hozier's Take Me To Church!

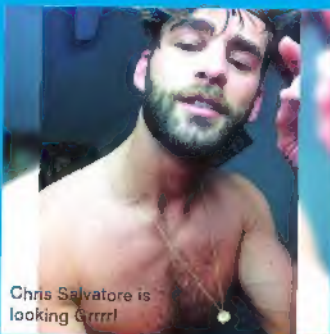
The video for one of this year's smash hits, Take Me To Church by Hozier, has been re-made. Directed by David LaChapelle, it stars sexy Russian dancer Sergei Polunin performing a powerful, interpretive dance wearing nothing but some nude leggings. Hot, steamy and sexy for sure! Watch it here: vimeo.com/118946875



SNAP HAPPY!

Our favourite pictures from Instagram...

The McBusted boys take a bath together!



Chris Salvatore is looking Grrrr!

Footballer Anton Hysen poses in the mirror



THE AWARD-WINNING
PLAY THAT INSPIRED
THE 1996 CULT FILM

Nottingham Playhouse and Curve Leicester
with Tom & Connell for Q&A id
presents

★ Stonewall GT
off on partners



'GO AND SEE IT, SEE IT AGAIN. AND AGAIN'

Gay Times



The Times



The Telegraph



The Guardian

JONATHAN HARVEY'S

BEAUTIFUL THING

A LOVE STORY

Directed by

NIKOLAI FOSTER

VANESSA
BABIRYE

CHARLIE
BROOKS

SAM
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Birmingham
Hippodrome

30 MARCH - 11 APRIL 2015

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BeautifulThing.com | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

"The play is about a bigger story than just my character being abused by his dad. It's about Ste getting abused and finding comfort in Jamie"



BEAUTIFUL THING

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EASTENDERS STAR THOMAS LAW

Nikolai Foster's celebrated anniversary production of Jonathan Harvey's modern comedy classic, *Beautiful Thing*, arrives in the Midlands this month to make audiences laugh and cry in equal measure. We talk to ex-*EastEnders* star Thomas Law, who plays the role of Ste, about the play, what to expect, and what he's been up to since leaving Albert Square.

You're probably best known for your role as Peter Beale in *EastEnders*. Was acting something you'd always wanted to do from an early age?

My grandparents were professional actors when they were younger, and my parents also did amateur dramatics, so I've always been around acting. When I was younger I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to be in local plays. So yeah, being an actor was something I always wanted to do.

Was a role in a soap such as *EastEnders* something you'd coveted?

I can definitely say that being in *EastEnders* was something I very much enjoyed, and something I was very fortunate to be able to do. However, I don't think I knew when I was younger that working on a soap was something I wanted to do. I went from being a young model to auditioning. Through several auditions I got a role in *Casualty*, where I experienced a bit of the soap industry. Ultimately *Casualty* led on to better things, landing me a role in *EastEnders*. It wasn't something that was driving me mad to get into, it was just a very fortunate opportunity.

You spent about four years in the soap. What was your favourite storyline involving Peter Beale?

My favourite was when I did a car-crash scene with three of the biggest names in the soap. Phil Mitchell, Billy Mitchell, and Ian Beale. I worked with those three and I centred around the families arguing and my character nearly dying. That was amazing to film and see on telly. It was such a great spectacle. It's definitely my favourite storyline.

Working with a big cast during your time in *EastEnders* must've been a lot of fun. Who were you closest to?

The people I was closest to were definitely the ones around my age, but I got on very well with everyone. My parents are great people and they brought me up to be very polite. As a result, everyone appreciated me being around them. But Hamish Pate and Charlie Hawkins, they were definitely two boys I hung out with every single day of my life from 12 to 18. They were great. They made my music taste a lot more interesting and definitely had an impact on me growing up.

Do you still watch the show?

To be honest, I don't. I never watched it because my dad is well into his sports and so am I. Watching soaps wasn't ever anything that I sat down and enjoyed. I'm still very aware of the storylines, as my mum still watches it. It's an exciting time for *EastEnders*.

After you left *EastEnders*, you did a bit of film work. You starred in *The World's End*, playing the younger version of Simon Pegg's character, Gary King. Did you find there was a big contrast between being in a soap and being in a movie?

I did. I did. I found doing the soap was something that was very exciting, with regular

work. And you work with such great people every single day. You get very comfortable doing it, though, and that's the only downsides. With *The World's End*, it was almost like a dream. I had my journeys traveling out to set with Simon Pegg and occasionally Martin Freeman, because we all lived close to each other. We'd get on set and there'd be sixty-foot cranes there, lighting up the streets, we were performing on. Then you'd bump into people like Pierce Brosnan, people I'd only ever dream of meeting. To do an improv scene with Pierce wasn't something you'd get in the soap world. I loved making the film, though, it was a burst of excitement and something that I can't replace.

You're about to embark on a nationwide tour of Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing*, playing Ste. Have you done anything on the stage before?

I have, yeah. I'm very lucky to be in this play and even at the moment, seeing great ticket sales, I'm very excited. Like I said before, I did local shows when I was very young, and I did Peter Pan at the Lowry when I was 18. That was a musical, so it's not quite the same as the play. I'm going to be doing this month. It'd have big audiences, though, which I'm sure will be replicated with this play. I think *Beautiful Thing* is going to open my eyes to the world of theatre. I'm very excited.

Were you aware of the story behind *Beautiful Thing* before you auditioned for the part of Ste?

I wasn't. If I'm honest, obviously I found out about the storyline before my audition and started watching the film version. I turned up for the rehearsals and the director told me not to watch it, as it might skew my perspective. So I've not actually seen the whole film, maybe the first twenty minutes. The rest is up to me to interpret for myself.

For those who haven't seen *Beautiful Thing*, either on stage or film, tell us a bit about the story.

The one thing that we've all been saying about the play is that it's about love. The play is about a bigger story than just my character being abused by his dad. It's about Ste getting abused and finding comfort in Jamie. That's a massive pull point for audiences, and both myself and my co-star Sam are going to try and do our roles just so we're going to try and show that it doesn't matter whether you're gay, straight, or if you find a friendship or a love in someone. You shouldn't feel scared to tell people how you feel. Be proud about it!

There's so much to love about the story. Are there any parts of the play that stand out for you?

We haven't actually started rehearsals yet, but I'm very excited about the bit where Leah wants to sound like Mama Cass and gets Sandra to strangle her, or hit her over the head with something, taunting and teasing her. I think Charlie Brooks is going to be great in that role! I think there are going to be so many points in the

play that will be loved. Without getting too deep about it, I think people have this misconception that it's just a gay play, which might put some people off. But it's got lots of drama in it and is very funny too. If there are any fans of myself and Sam Jackson who go to see it, then they're going to see us in a very different light.

As you say, you're working alongside Sam Jackson, who's playing Jamie. How's the chemistry between the two of you?

We met Sam and I got on with him very well. He's great and we hit it off straight away. We both know we've got a big task ahead of us. We've spoken about the play and how we're going to do it on tour. We're both very excited about it. It's similar to working on a soap because it already has an audience, due to its classic status. We both know that we're in a privileged position of playing roles that many great names have played before. We need to try and do the characters justice. Sam and I both know what needs doing. Hopefully the audiences will enjoy it.

You're also reunited with fellow *EastEnders* Charlie Brooks, who played Janine Butcher in the soap. She's playing the part of Sandra. Are you excited to be working with her again?

Yeah, I am. She's a great laugh! When we've been out socially, she's great fun. Obviously she was very kind to me when we worked on *EastEnders* together. Now that I'm seeing Charlie working on this play, playing someone her son's age, I've been teasing her about it. She's not taking it well at all. Nah, she loves it and I'll be very happy to spend six weeks out on tour with her.

What else do you want to achieve in your career? Will you go back to TV, stick to the stage or aim for superstardom in the movies?

I feel that by the end of this year I'll have achieved what some actors try to achieve in their lifetime, and it's something I'm very proud of. I'll have done film, a soap and been a West End actor - and that's a great thing to have on my CV. I definitely would love to do more film and another play. I can't really put my mind into the future too much because I'm focused on *Beautiful Thing*. Once I'm done with this, I can set my mind on something else, whether it's another play or whatever. I love writing too, so that's something else I could be getting on with. If there's nothing out there that feels right, I'm creative enough to try and develop something myself.

I just want a lengthy career and to make the right choices.

Beautiful Thing is showing at Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 30 March Sat 31 April, Nottingham Playhouse, Tue 21 April Sat 2 May, and Leicester's Curve Theatre, Mon 21 Sat 30 May.

*'Oh horrible, horrible experiences
Horrendous gigs. There was a guy once
where the gig went so badly he was waiting
in the car park to ask for his money back.'*

JASON MANFORD

HAPPY TO BE PLAYING
LEO BLOOM IN THE PRODUCERS

As a stand-up comedian and panel show host, Jason Manford needs no introduction. His chirpy-chappy routines regularly sell out arenas across the country, while his TV appearances guarantee plenty of appreciative armchair fans. Back in 2012, Manford surprised West End critics with his performance in a revival of *Sweeney Todd*. Preparing to take to the stage once again, this time playing Leo Bloom in the UK tour of Mel Brooks' *The Producers*, Jason recently took time out from rehearsals to talk to Midlands Zone...

What makes *The Producers* your 'favourite musical of all time'?

I guess it's because it's written by a comedian, so it naturally lends itself to a comic sensibility. There are so many obvious 'big gags', but there are also loads of subtle jokes. Every day you're finding another gag somewhere, and that's mainly why it really suits me. It's really funny and, in a way, a little offensive - but I guess in 2015 we're a bit more blasé about what we find offensive. I imagine at the time of its original release, it would've been seen as a lot more offensive.

What does your experience as a stand-up comedian enable you to contribute to the role of Leo Bloom?

I guess you see the world through different eyes. Mel Brooks came up with the original idea back in the 1960s and it was based on two stories. He'd heard about this sloth of a producer, and he'd also heard about these criminals who were laundering money. So he basically put the two ideas together. As a

comic, that's what you do all the time - you hear two or three funny stories and you amalgamate them to create a routine. So I guess in that respect, for me as a comic who's always writing, it's great just to be given a really funny script and not have to do anything. It's not like when you're given a sitcom script and you're going through it, trying to make it *work*.

Do you have a favourite one-liner that you deliver?

I love the blue blanket scene at the beginning. It's fun, neurotic, hyperactive and really crazy. I'm basically Judy Garland - that's who Leo Bloom is. He's brand new to showbusiness and is having his eyes opened very quickly to a lot of things he's never experienced before. My favourite line of his is "Stop the world, I want to get on". It's a really big moment for him, and you could just imagine a young Judy Garland saying it off camera.

Will it be a bit of a jolly, working alongside fellow comedians Ross Noble and Phil

Jupiter?

We're having so much fun at the moment. Both of them are playing the same part at different times in the tour, and already they're bringing things to it that aren't in the script - different ideas and different moments that are just really funny. But the whole cast are great fun. It's really weird coming into a different world, where people sort of know each other a bit and you're the outsider. Everyone is just really excited to be involved in such a brilliant musical.

You cut your teeth on the stage in *Sweeney Todd*, for which you received plenty of acclaim. Did that set the bar in terms of the pressure you put on yourself?

What's interesting is that I'm so used to being on top of my game. I put loads of work into it and I make sure that it's good - but when you come to do something like this, where somebody else is directing it, somebody else has written it, someone else is producing it, it's hard to let go of the power that you normally

have. Sweeney Todd is at the top of the Premier League of musicals. It's a great Sondheim show, and to perform alongside Imelda Staunton and Michael Ball was just fantastic, even for the short run that I did. I guess after a taste of that, I was just waiting for another Premier League musical.

Do you ever foresee acting superceding your career as a stand-up comedian?

I don't think so. I love stand-up - it's my favourite way of performing because it's so direct. Everything you say, the audience is on it. You can't get better than that.

So what made you decide to become a comedian?

I was sixteen or seventeen when I first started and I didn't really think about it. I just had some funny ideas and an opportunity to do a few gigs, so I did them. There wasn't a business plan. I think I started in '98 or '99. I think I first got paid for a gig in 2004, so there was a good five or six years of going at it and getting into debt. I had other jobs, I was working in an office, on a building site, in a burger restaurant or a toy shop. I had hundreds of jobs and would do them for as long as possible - basically until they sacked me because I kept heading off to do a gig somewhere!

Were you funny at school?

I thought I was hilarious, but since school I've occasionally bumped into someone in a supermarket and they've said, 'I can't believe you're a comedian'. I was a naughty boy at primary school level, although I never brought the police to the door, as my mum always points out with pride. One of the punishments my dad used was to send me to stand in the corner and face the wall. The wall he chose had a bookshelf, and invariably I would pick up a book. I remember going into school and everyone else was reading *Tim And Tina Go To The Beach*. I was bored out of my brain, as I'd just finished reading *Lord Of The Rings*. I was quite an advanced reader from an early age, so I was really bored at school. So I became naughty and thought of daft things to do. By the time I reached secondary school, I was always telling daft stories. Mrs Cooper, my English teacher, wasn't very happy when I used to interrupt her lessons. On one occasion she asked me to share my story with everybody. So I did, and it got a laugh. Mrs Cooper said it was a fun story and set me extra homework for that night to write it out as a story, which I did. That was the first piece of material that I wrote. I guess I was about twelve or thirteen. I took it into her and she said, 'Well, that's what really happened, so why don't you go away and see if you can add to it and make things up around the story, rather than it being purely fact'. She advised me to lose a couple of elements of the story which weren't as important and to add some things that would be really funny. I probably remember her advice better than she does, but it was a key moment for me.

What's your process when writing material, and where do you find your inspiration?
I suppose it's a bit clichéd but 'life', really. I'm

surrounded by funny people. The kids are funny, and I'm always hanging around with funny people - even this cast. We've been out to dinner a few times with Cory, who plays Max, and he makes me laugh so much. He tells me stories and I'm like, 'I'm writing that down, I could use that'. I like to try and be open-minded about things. I do find myself in scrapes sometimes and wonder, 'Why am I here? Why have I done this?', but it's always because there'll be some fun in it.

What kind of shape do you think the UK comedy scene is in at the moment?

I think there are a lot of brilliant comics at the top level, but there are also loads of brilliant comics coming through from comedy clubs. Me and my brother have a comedy club business and it's hard. It doesn't make any money, but it's kind of putting something back in. It's what we both wanted to do, and we've discovered loads of great comedians.

Do you both scout for new talent, or do you leave that to your brother?

He's a comic as well, but he's also the operations manager for the business.

So what career advice would you give to a raw, hungry, up-and-coming comedian? I'd say, don't take any of my work!

I would just say to people, compare yourself to yourself. Don't think 'Why has that guy got that', or 'Why is Michael McIntyre doing so well?', or 'I'm really funny, so why is so-and-so doing that gig, not me?'. You know what, just don't worry about it. If you're doing better now than you were six months ago, then you're doing well.

Can you relate to that? Have you ever compared yourself to other people?

No. From early on, my dad instilled in us, 'Your horizon becomes your middle distance. Aim far, and one day you'll get there and you'll get a new aim'. You're constantly striving to move forward and make yourself better. There's actually no point in comparing yourself to anybody else. It's not healthy. There will always be a Michael McIntyre. There will always be a Peter Kay. There will always be a Richard Branson, a Bill Gates and all of those people. There's always going to be someone better than you, but that should make you strive more.

What's been your worst experience of being heckled?

Oh horrible, horrible experiences. Horrendous gigs. There was a guy once where the gig went so badly he was waiting in the car park to ask for his money back.

And did you give it him?

No, but it was really awkward. It was like a really polite mugging.

What's your favourite joke?

I've got a routine that I love doing about the woman in Coventry who put a cat in a bin a few years ago. It's one of those stories that everyone remembers. There's also a joke I did on my very first Apollo show: 'The weather in Manchester is like the Muslims in Iraq, it's either

sunny or Shiite'. What I love about that is, because of my accent and being a northerner, people think, 'Oh, he's probably a racist, he's got that accent'. When you say the words 'Muslims in Iraq', you do see half the audience thinking, 'Hey up, where's this going?'. In the end, though, it's just simple international word play, a bit of a silly pun. You hear the audience laughing, but you're also aware of them breathing a sigh of relief. I like playing that card a little bit.

You mentioned about your business with your brother. Will you be popping into that very well-known comedy club during your time in Brum?

I think so, yes. We're there on Broad Street on Saturday nights. I've played it a couple of times and I've got some other big-name comics coming to play over the next few months. I like to keep those as a bit of a surprise - I guess to reward loyalty. Rather than put them on general sale and get a load of people who've never been and will probably never come again, I try to only let people know who've already booked tickets. A kind of works.

Tell us about the new BBC drama you'll be appearing in later this year...

It's called *Ordinary Lives* and is written by Danny Brockdehurst, who's a brilliant writer. He did *The Driver* for the BBC. He also did *Shameless* and *Clocking Off*. It's very funny but also quite sad. My character is a guy who's about to get sacked and panics. He lies and says his wife has died, even though she's at home and fine. I guess he slightly enjoys the lie because he gets a lot of sympathy and attention, which he's never experienced before. There's some comedy and some obvious drama in the unravelling of the lie, but it's just a guy having a midlife crisis and making it worse for himself. It's a great cast - Michelle Keegan, Mackenzie Crook, Sally Lindsay, Max Beesley and Jo Joyner - a really solid cast and it's really well written. The producers are either side of making *Happy Valley* for the BBC, so they know what they're doing too.

Do you consider working on TV a bit of a breeze in comparison to touring?

It's certainly easier. Obviously there's not as much travelling, there's nobody staring at you and nobody's paid twenty-five pounds or whatever on the understanding that you make them laugh! That said, the immediacy of stand-up is very attractive. Once you've told a joke, you get a laugh, you know it's gone well. With TV, you film the scene and then wait four months until it's on the telly to get a reaction.

Is there another big stage role that you'd love to take on?

I'd love to play Javert in *Les Misérables*. I don't know if they'd ever employ a comedian in that role - but like my dad always points out, 'Frank Spencer did *Phantom Of The Opera*, so if that can happen, anything can happen'.

THE COMEDIAN STANDS **How Alexander**
McNally, Birmingham, from Mon 2 to Sat
5 Aug



Talking balls and bulls with BIRMINGHAM BULLS RFC

Birmingham Bulls RFC is the city's very own LGBT rugby club. Midlands Zone talks to Club Secretary Mark Goodfellow about why an LGBT rugby team is needed in 2015, and why it's important to the gay community. We also talk about homophobia in sport and why there's a lack of 'out' sports professionals...

Birmingham Bulls RFC is a gay and inclusive rugby team for Birmingham and the surrounding areas. When did the team first come together and why?

The club first formed in 2011 with a group of four friends who wanted to play rugby with others from the LGBT community. Since then we've grown to over 40 members, and the club has full membership of Eng and Rugby

What's the importance of having a gay rugby team? Why wouldn't members and players just join any other rugby team?

We use the term inclusive, as there are no requirements to join us - except the desire to play rugby. Rumour has it that some of our

members are straight, but that's not an issue for us! The importance of having a club like ours is that it's a way of getting into the sport in a guaranteed supportive and safe environment. You haven't got the fear of the reaction when people find out that you're gay. Nor do people question your motives. And you haven't got to worry about your skill level: if you're maybe a bit older or starting to play for the first time, it's really about removing the barriers to people getting into rugby. That's not to say that other rugby clubs aren't a safe environment, but there's always the fear of the unknown. In fact, a number of our players do play for other local clubs. We have close links with Harborne RFC, and you'll often find a few of our lads in Harborne kit on

a Saturday when we haven't got a match.

What are the benefits of playing rugby?

Becoming part of something bigger, be that your team, your club or the rest of the rugby community. And the development and experience that goes along with it. Things like learning to support and value your teammates, developing the skills and physical and mental strength to be able to play 80 minutes of full contact rugby - even if you're 20 points down at half-time. Then obviously there's the social side. By tradition, rugby has always had a big social side, which is entirely understandable. After all, if you're willing to play 80 minutes of rugby alongside your teammates, then you're certainly going to want to socialise with them.

How important is a team like Birmingham Bulls RFC not only to the gay community but also the wider community?

For the gay community it provides an alternative social activity where people can get out and socialise in an environment that isn't centred around pubs and clubs (or sex). And due to the fact that pretty much anyone can play rugby, regardless of body type, we get a wide variety of people. The benefit to the wider community is that it breaks down barriers. When we play other clubs, there are often other matches being played at the same time, so in the bar afterwards we're all united by rugby. It's only the club tie that differentiates us.

What are the physical challenges in playing rugby? Do you have to train often?

Rugby requires physical strength and endurance as well as cardiovascular fitness but that doesn't mean you need to look like a Men's Health cover model or be in the gym five days a week. We train twice weekly in the summer and once a week in the winter, with the option of attending a second session with Harborne RFC. The sessions include a mix of fitness work and skill work, then usually a short game to bring it all together.

How often do you play games against other clubs? Are they typically other gay rugby clubs?

We've had our busiest season so far, with matches every other week. We typically play other gay rugby clubs both at home and away. This season we've had our first local match against Walsall RFC. There isn't much to say about the event - it was two teams playing rugby.

What was it like playing a 'regular' team?

They fielded a good team, so unfortunately we lost the match. In terms of us being an inclusive team, nothing to report. It was just like every other match, from arrival to drinks afterwards. No funny looks, no sniggers. We even had someone's child join us when we were throwing the ball around for a warm-up.

What are the club's ambitions? Do you intend to join a local league at some point in the future?

We want to continue to grow and develop the club, but we definitely plan on joining a local league. The whole point of the club is to play rugby - not 'gay rugby', just rugby. If you're up for a game, then we are too.

You're heading to Brussels in May for the Union Cup. It's a big challenge that sees the Bulls facing teams from across the world. Are you excited? Nervous? How big a challenge do you think it'll be?

We're excited. It will be a similar challenge to whenever we play a match. The only differences will be the tournament structure and the amount of rugby played in a short time-frame. Pretty much the whole club is up for it.

Let's move on to homophobia in sport. Obviously it's important that homophobia is kicked out of any sport. What can be done at a grass roots level to help eradicate it?

We're lucky in rugby - there doesn't seem to be the same tribalism as in other sports. You'll often see opposition fans in the stadium drinking beer together. It needs to be something that runs through the sport. Players and clubs at all levels have to make a stand and make it known what isn't acceptable.

And how about further up, with the governing bodies? What do you think they should be doing?

They need to be setting the standards, and it needs to be something that's embedded within the game and their organisations. They also need not to be worried about criticising action, highlighting best practice and providing support. Rugby is very fortunate in this, as LGBT representation is embedded within World Rugby's governance structure.

Have you ever experienced any homophobia when playing rugby?

Absolutely none, not even the casual kind - and that includes when playing and training for Harborne. I think a few years ago there may have been comments or raised eyebrows, but I think it's now accepted that we play rugby just like everyone else.



Stonewall has been helping reduce and eradicate homophobia in football with its rainbow laces campaign. What do you make of the campaign?

The laces were really cool, but a short campaign is only going to be part of the answer. What it did show is how difficult the FA and lots of clubs found it to deal with the issue.

Talking about the lack of LGBT professional sportsmen and women, why do you think they're not as visible as we'd like them to be?

I don't think there's a lack within sport, but there are a lack of those who're publicly out. I expect in changing rooms up and down the UK there are sports people who're out to their teammates, but just haven't publicly.

announced it. This may be because of where they are personally - concerns about abuse on the pitch, or simply feeling that there's no benefit to them in doing so.

Do you think if there were more 'out' professional players, homophobia would rise or fall?

It would fall. It would stop being remarkable and just become something that is. "I don't like gays, but you're right," is a line we've heard countless times. As soon as the stereotype goes, the issues that go with it also go.

You've got a fundraising event at Birmingham's Eden Bar on Saturday 7 March. What's the event for and what can people attending expect?

The event is to support our entry into the Union Cup. We've been able to financially support the event registrar on for all of our members who wish to go, which has meant the difference between playing and not playing for some of our members. On the night, you can expect Birmingham Bulls, Ednburgh Thebans, fun, games, team challenges and a willingness to have a really good night out.

You're actually sponsored by Birmingham's Eden Bar. How supportive are they as sponsors?

Unbelievably supportive, and not just in a financial sense. We have a real relationship with them. From hosting our black tie end-of-season dinner in the Marquee (which looked stunning) through to club meetings, post-match food, drinks after training or just random nights out.

Finally, what's planned for Birmingham Bulls RFC for the rest of 2015?

If anything, the end of the season is our busiest time. We've got the Union Cup, lots of training, five more matches (so far), our end-of-season dinner and awards ceremony and our AGM. We're finishing the season with the Touch My Brum touch rugby tournament in June.

If you'd like to join the Birmingham Bulls RFC, get in touch by calling 07547 651106, or visit www.birminghambullsrfc.co.uk



TAKING PRIDE IN SPORT

Birmingham's LGBT sports festival

Having recently been awarded a grant to develop sport and fitness projects for the city's gay community, Birmingham LGBT have been busy devising ways to get people a lot fitter than ever before. Here, the charity organisation's Penny Barber provides an update about its fitness scheme, Activate, and the forthcoming Pride In Sport festival. The best part? All activities are free and easily accessible...



Ready, Steady, Activate!

It's been an energetic start to the year, with good take up of Tai Chi, Body Conditioning and Pilates beginners' courses. We're taking bookings NOW for Yoga Essentials - a six-week beginners' course starting on Wednesday 18 March, from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. Ideas for beginners' classes you'd like to try later in the year are very welcome. And if you're an instructor, we'd love to hear from you.

We're hosting Drop-in Yoga on Monday

mornings from 11am till noon and a progression class in Body Conditioning on Monday nights. If you're an instructor who would like to provide classes free of charge, as a contribution to the community do get in touch. Instructors and personal trainers are also very welcome to hire The Vault and charge their clients directly.

Do you want somewhere for your own workout? Why not come and use The Vault? It's free to individuals, so please make a booking.

Pride In Sport is coming

Pride In Sport takes place on Saturday 18 April from noon until 6pm. Save the date! The event features an afternoon of competitive activities at University of Birmingham, who are partners in Activate. You can compete as an individual, a team of four - or both! There'll be around 10 activities, and we request that you pick a minimum of three. Points will be awarded for the standard you reach.

Activities planned so far include badminton, football, rugby, running, swimming, table tennis, water polo, rowing and netball. Our local LGBT clubs are devising the skills tests and tournaments. You can gain extra points for travelling to the event from the Birmingham LGBT Centre on foot, by bicycle or canoe.

You can add a final flourish to your total with the last event - ballroom dancing (instruction given). We'll finish the day by celebrating our prowess and showing off our medals (and newly learned dance steps?) at a social. If you don't fancy competing, how about volunteering to help with stewarding and marshalling, record keeping and scoring?

Biking in Brum

Our Sports Activator has trained as a cycling instructor under the Big Birmingham Bikes programme and shortly hopes to be able to offer instruction and support to groups and individuals.

This can be with your own bike or using the Big Birmingham Bikes cycle hubs. Please contact us if you'd like to learn how to ride a bike or improve your confidence. We also plan to offer daytime walking and running for beginners and returners.

Could you enthuse someone to try exercise or return to it? Could you lead a walking or cycling group or assist a reader? Do you want to set up a new club or a different type or level of activity within an existing club? We're looking for volunteers - full support given.

The Vault is Birmingham LGBT Centre's dedicated fitness hub



For further details, contact Activate Sports Activator, Penny Barber, by emailing pennybarber@bglbt.org or calling 0121 643 0821

Birmingham LGBT Centre



The Birmingham LGBT Centre, where a number of fitness classes take place

PRIDE_{IN} SPORT

CHALLENGE DAY 2015

**AFTERNOON OF FUN SPORTS & FITNESS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**COMPETE AS AN INDIVIDUAL, TEAM OF FOUR OR BOTH
THERE WILL BE 10 ACTIVITIES - PICK AT LEAST 3
POINTS WILL BE AWARDED FOR THE STANDARD YOU REACH
ALL ABILITIES WELCOME, IT'S ABOUT HAVING FUN!
FOLLOWED BY AN EVENING SOCIAL**

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

MIDDAY UNTIL 6PM

18 APRIL 2015

contact pennybarber@blgbt.org or call us on 0121 643 0821

WWW.PRIDEINSPORT.ORG.UK



Pride in sports days are
a collaboration between
Birmingham LGBT &
Birmingham's LGBT
Sports Clubs



SPRUCE UP YOUR WARDROBE THIS SPRING



Winter's flying, Spring's nearly here - so what better time can there be to brighten up your wardrobe? Here are some of our favourite items this month...

01 Jacquard-knit Jumper

Start your Spring collection off with this eye-catching Jacquard-knit jumper. Made from 100% cotton, it's sure to make you stand out from the crowd.

£24.99
www.hm.com

02 White Smokey Rose Tee

Pair this smoky rose design with black turn-up skinny jeans and lace-up plimsolls. It's a great look for the Spring.

£9.99
www.newlook.co.uk

03 Red Hawaiian Floral Print Jumper

The vibrant Hawaiian design of this red jumper will inject a fresh aesthetic into your weekend wardrobe. This piece is made for layering.

£32.00
www.riverisland.com

04 Faded T-shirt with Mixed Print

This light-grey t-shirt is a great look with blue wash skinny jeans, and features a multi-coloured mixed print.

£7.99
www.hm.com

05 White Melons Print Jumper

A conversational print jumper is one key piece you need to update your wardrobe. Choose this white round-neck version, boasting a repeat melon design.

£32.00
www.riverisland.com

06 White Fish Print Short Sleeve Shirt

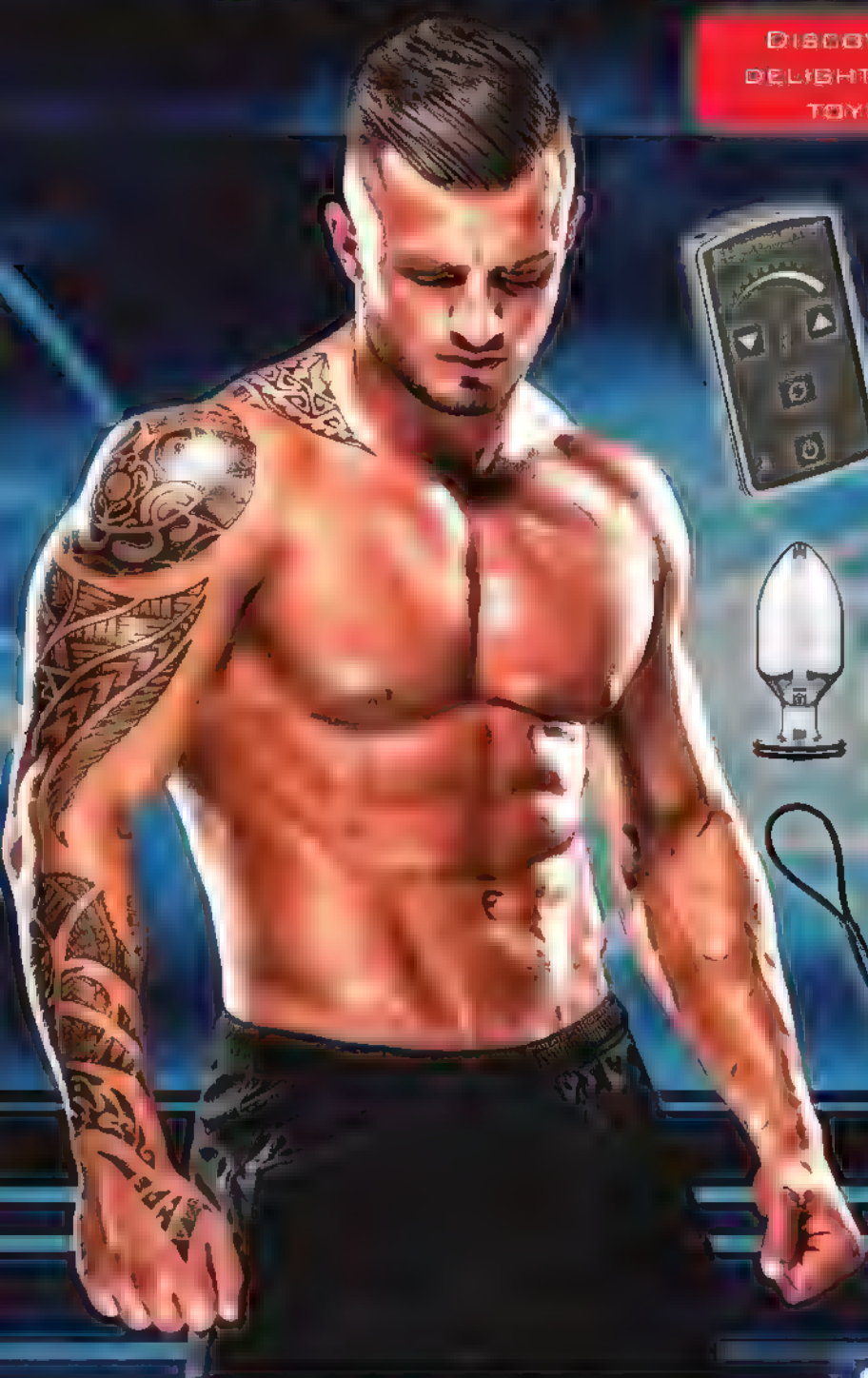
A conversational print shirt is another key wardrobe update this season. Get your gear in order with this repeat fish print version.

£25.00
www.riverisland.com

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DISCOVER THE SALACIOUS
DELIGHTS THAT ELECTRO SEX
TOYS HAVE TO OFFER



www.clonezone.co.uk

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Earls Court - 266 Old Brompton Road, London SW5 9HR



Also available online at
www.clonezone.co.uk



01



02



03

GO GO GADGETS!



04



05



06

Gadgets. We're all obsessed with the latest and greatest - so here are our favourites this month...

01 Withings Activité Pop

Activité Pop helps you embrace healthy habits while adapting to your rhythm of life and complementing your style. The watch syncs with your phone to track waking, running, sleeping and swimming.

£119.95

www.withings.com

02 August Smart Lock

The August Smart Lock provides intelligent, secure access to your home. Now you can control who can enter and

who can't - without the need for keys or codes. And you can do it all from your smart phone.

£249.99

www.august.com

03 Emperor 1510

The Emperor offers functionalities that enable the user to experience unprecedented comfort and quasi total immersion through strategically positioned monitors, audio system and accessories. The result is a complete computer office, ergonomically opti-

mised, with a minimal footprint that improves overall performance and productivity.

£7,500

www.firebox.com

04 Parrot Bebop Drone

Drones are cool, we all know that. But the Parrot Bebop Drone is a great contender for the amateur drone pilot. It's lightweight and built with safety in mind. The onboard camera records full HD video and is stabilised on three axes. It even syncs with your smartphone or tablet so you

can pilot the drone in first-person view.

£429.99

www.mapin.co.uk

05 Arcam Solo Soundbar

There are a lot of soundbars on the market at the moment in an effort to enhance your telly's mediocre sound quality. The Arcam Solo Soundbar looks great and will decode all formats of HD audio. Plus, it integrates Bluetooth so you can stream your favourite tracks from your smartphone. If you want something a little

bit meatier for an extra £500 you can add the Solo Sub.

£800

www.arcam.com

06 Panono

Panono is more than just a panoramic camera. The Panono creates 100-megapixel panoramic shots with a 360° field of view - a total of 36 integrated cameras take a shot in every direction at once. And you're right in the centre of it all.

€ 549

www.panono.com



Make New Friends



Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership NHS

Get in touch



Gaylife Staffordshire-Stoke



0300 123 0970

Why not...

Come to our **Gay Mens Group** each **Wednesday**

Piccadilly Project, Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent, ST1 1HR

19:00-21:30

NHS

LEICESTER



Free, private and confidential sexual health checks to gay & bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (MSM)

Celts Narborough Road

Date: Every Tuesday

Time: 3pm - 6pm

Place: Celts Narborough Road
Narborough Road, Leicester, LE3 0BQ



City Celts Sauna Clinic:

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 3pm - 5pm

Place: City Celts Sauna, 33 New Bond
Street, Leicester, LE1 3JA

Splash Spa & Leisure Clinic

Date: Every Thursday

Time: 3pm - 6pm

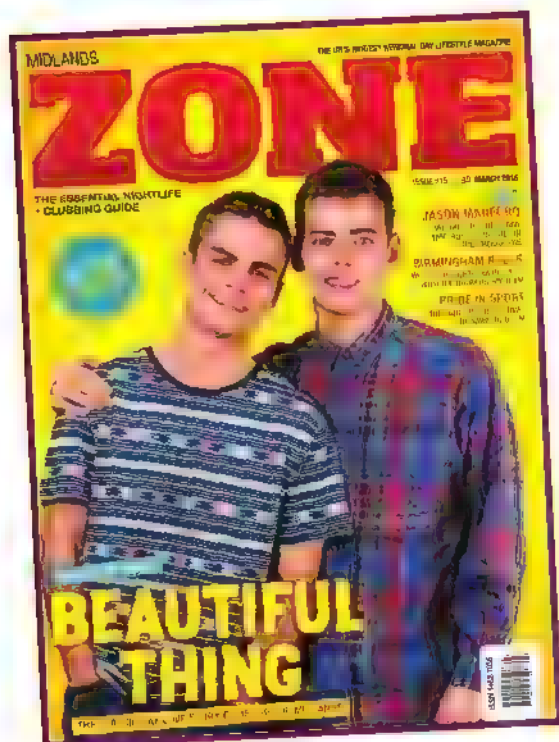
Place: splash spa & leisure & bar
Street, Leicester, LE1 3JA

Information available at
www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk

For more information go to www.tradesexualhealth.com

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED

GET YOUR COPY DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR EVERY MONTH



...you just pay for the postage and packing!

Yes, we know you're wondering what the catch is
Well, there isn't one

We've ripped up our subscription rates so that more
of you can get the No 1 gay magazine in the Midlands
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And at just £2 an issue to cover the postage and packing,
there's never been a better time to get it delivered!

**It's easy - just call our
Subscription Hotline
on 01743 281714**

**Simply pay the postage and packing cost
of £2 per issue by debit or credit card!**



01



02



03



04



05



06

KITCHEN RIGHT WARES

01 Encore Oval Bowl
Innovative in shape and styling, this striking bowl is created using a replicated form and a stainless steel square tube. **£72.00**
www.in-spaces.com

02 Engraved Wine Bottle Stand
This beautiful stainless steel Engraved Wine Bottle Stand lays the bottle at an angle so the label is visible. **£39.99**
www.gettingpersonal.co.uk

03 Sense Bin Ivory
Infra-red technology with touch-free sensors for clever waste disposal - simply hover your hand 10cm above the lid to open. **£49**
www.made.com

04 Compact Stand-alone Kitchen
A stand-alone, multi-tasking compact kitchen that can be adapted to meet the challenges of today's lifestyle. **£3000**
www.rational.de/en

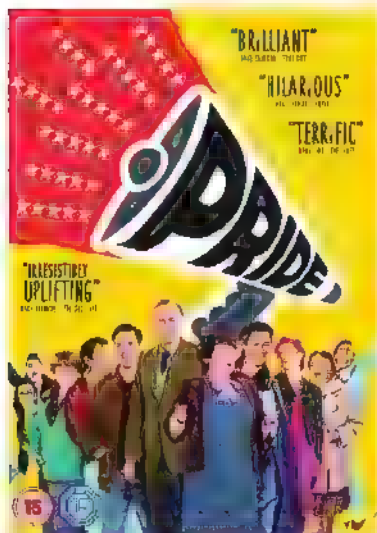
05 Bugatti Food Blender
This modern designer red food mixer creates a focal point on any counter top. With its tower design and vivid colour, it just aches to be used. **£170**
www.redcandy.co.uk

06 Harlequin China Collection
Both striking and elegant, the Harlequin collection is decorated with black diamonds and finished with 22-carat gold detail. **£110**
www.anconstantine.com

WIN!

WIN! Smash-hit film Pride on DVD

Three copies to give away!



LGBT-interest film *Pride* is this month being released on DVD and Blu-Ray - and we've got three copies to give away!

In the summer of 1984, Margaret Thatcher is in power and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is on strike. At the Gay Pride March in London, a group of gay and lesbian activists decide to raise money to support the families of the striking miners. But there's a problem. The Union seems embarrassed to receive their support. Undeterred, the activists decide to ignore the NUM and go direct to the miners. They identify a mining village in Wales and set off in a minibus to make their donation in person. And so begins the extraordinary story of two seemingly alien communities who form a surprising and ultimately triumphant partnership. For your chance to win a copy of *Pride*, visit www.midlandszone.co.uk and answer the following question.

Who do the gay and lesbian activists raise money for?

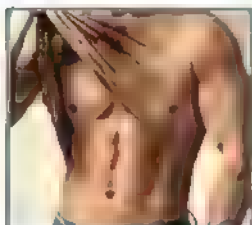
- A) Striking miners
- B) A music group
- C) A group of school children

Pride is available from Monday 2 March on Blu-ray and DVD from www.amazon.co.uk



Enter the prize competition online at www.midlandszone.co.uk for the chance to win a copy of *Pride* on DVD or Blu-Ray.

BOYZILIAN Studio
Exclusive male grooming



Waxing • Advanced Facials
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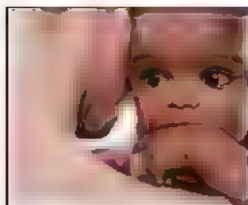
T. 0121 616 5043 M. 07477 943 944

Lonsdale House, Blucher St, Birmingham City Centre, B11 1QU

E. info@boyzilianstudio.com W. www.boyzilianstudio.com

LGBT adoption & fostering

Mon 9th March, 7-9pm
Trinity Road, Dudley, DY1 1JB



You could adopt a child if you are...

- Single, married or unmarried
- From any ethnic or religious background
- Heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- A Homeowner or living in rented accommodation
- Employed or on benefits

When you change their lives by adopting, we'll help you deal with the changes in yours

Adopting's brings can be one of the most rewarding things you can do. But it can also be one of the hardest. When you adopt with Barnardo's and give them the life they deserve we help you with ongoing support and advice not just during the adoption process, but also in the years beyond. Because when you take children into your family, we'll take you into ours.

Believe in children
Barnardo's

Visit our website and see the difference you can make
www.barnardos.org.uk/adoption

Barnardo's is proud to stand up for our LGBT staff, volunteers and the young people and families we support all year round. This LGBT History month 2015, we are especially pleased to have been ranked 30th in this year's top 100 LGBT-friendly organisations in the 2015 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

01384 458585 or email traceycoleman@barnardos.org.uk

Registered Charity No.s 216250 and SC037605



WHAT'S ON IN YOUR LOCAL GAY VENUES

SCENE

MARCH 2015



CHARLI XCX

**BRINGS BOOM CLAP
TO BIRMINGHAM**



**CHARLIE HIDES
IN THE MIDLANDS**

LA VOIX

LA VOIX

LA VOIX

at Sidewalk for a giant
fect red cups and jelly

THE BIGGEST GAY MONDAY NIGHT IN THE MIDLANDS!

just got BIGGER!

NEW!
RESIDENT
HOST
MISS MARTY
EVERY MONDAY

PLAY ALONG
WITH MARTY...
QUICK FIRE BINGO PARTY
GAMES & GIVEAWAYS
GALORE FROM 10PM!

FREE ENTRY
BEFORE
MIDNIGHT!
10PM - 3AM

Fabulous

Join Birmingham's award-winning Marty -
The Girl That Likes to Party -
EVERY MONDAY from 10pm

PLUS: The ALL NEW
Happy Hour from 10pm
PLUS drinks from £1 ALL NIGHT!

Barbie Bombs - Just £1.50
Buy 2 Large glasses of
House Wine and get the rest
of the bottle free!



MONDAY 2 MARCH
GLITTER
LIPS

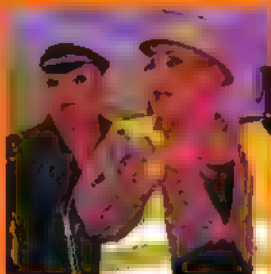
MONDAY 6 APRIL
VICKY JACKSON
AS PINK

C:21

Live cabaret at Shrewsbury's C:21 with GLITTER LIPS

Monday nights at C:21 in Shrewsbury is one of the biggest gay nights in the West Midlands. The first Monday of every month sees the popular venue hosting live cabaret, with March's spot being filled by the one and only drag duo, Glitter Lips! Not only that, every Monday night throughout the month sees Marty, the girl who likes to party, take to the stage with fun and games!

SHREWSBURY



IT'S THE MINISTRY OF POUND AT MISSING!

Birmingham's popular Missing Bar on Hurst Street brings you Pounded each and every Monday. From 9pm onwards, you can get your hands on selected drinks from £1. Spirits, beer, bottles - you name it, it's on offer!

MISSING - BIRMINGHAM

on selected spirits, £1.50
Jagerbomb / Carling / Strongbow / Sambucca
SIDEWALK

SUGAR RUSH £2 entry drinks from £2 various DJs
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

MONDAY MADNESS Weekly drink

BAR JESTER

OUTSKIRTS

BAR JESTER

WEST MIDLANDS

FABULOUS Fun & Games with resident host Marty (The girl who likes to party) Mon 2 Mar - Live cabaret with drag duo Glitter Lips Free

admission before midnight and just £3 after. Great drinks offers all night long with drinks starting at just £1

C.21, SHREWSBURY

THE MONDAY CLUB 9pm-5am Student night Everything is £2 (Shots £1) with DJ Lee Edward GORGEOUS, WOLVERHAMPTON

CHILLAX and Free Pool w/

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

WOLVERHAMPTON

CHILL NIGHT with Karaoke THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

DISCO 7pm-midnight

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

GOSPIP STOKES ON TRENT

STUDENT NIGHT F

PINK, STOKES ON TRENT

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

DISCO 7pm-midnight

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DISCO 7pm-midnight

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

BIRMINGHAM

2-FOR-1 COCKTAILS AT BRUM BAR

When you've finished work for the day, instead of heading straight home, why not pop into The Loft Lounge in Birmingham for a cheeky cocktail or two? Selected cocktails are two-for-one all day and night between Sunday and Friday! Booom! THE LOFT LOUNGE - BIRMINGHAM

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS Sunday to Friday All day & night Wind down after work with a cocktail or two THE LOFT LOUNGE

MINISTRY OF POUND with DJ Mike Emery from 9pm Selected drinks £1 Open until 2am MISSING BAR

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT with Mrs Mills and Dr Deano Cash prizes and free drinks Happy Hour 12noon-10pm THE VILLAGE INN

POUNDED Come and get Pounded from 6pm onwards. £1

TACKY TUESDAYS

Birmingham gay scene favourites Miss Penny and Charlotte the Harlot offer a night of fun and games every Tuesday at The Village Inn. Boasting laughs and prizes galore, it's a perfect way to get rid of any start-of-the-week blues you may be suffering! Go on, pop in and say hello!



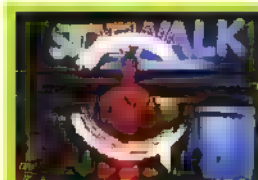
2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS - Sunday to Friday All day & night Wind down after work with a cocktail or two THE LOFT LOUNGE

KARAOKE TIME AT MISSING BAR

Everyone loves a bit of karaoke in their lives - so head to Missing Bar in Birmingham and join DJ James from 9pm till late. Whether you're good or bad at singing, it's great fun - so go on, grab the mic! MISSING - BIRMINGHAM

MISSING KARAOKE With your host

DJ James Party starts at 9pm till late MISSING BAR



2 MEALS FOR £10

If you're peckish, head down to Sidewalk in Birmingham. They have a cracking 'two meals for a tenner' menu - great for you and a mate to enjoy, setting you up for a top night on the town. We've tried it and it's fab!

TACKY TUESDAYS with Charlotte and Miss Penny Songs Games & Prizes Happy Hour 12noon-10pm THE VILLAGE INN

TUNE UP TUESDAY

BAR JESTER

BIG TUESDAY NIGHT PARTY

THE LION BAR & CLUB, WALSLEY

CAMP QUIZ With free buffet C

THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

DIVERSITY Weekly day fr

hing from oob & hip hop to d

VELVET, WORCESTER

FLAUNT A twist of aw

BREWERY TAP, WORCESTER

SAMMIE'S SINGERS Kara

THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

TWISTED TUESDAYS Hosted

Cherry Dar

RAINBOWS,

RAINBOWS,

2 TILL 2 Open from 2pm till 2am

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

CHILL OUT NIGHT F

NEW FORESTERS, NOTTINGHAM

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

DOVER CASTLE, LEICESTER

Wednesdays are 2 GOOD 2 MISS at Missing Bar in Brum

Missing Bar In Birmingham certainly knows how to throw an awesome party, regardless of which day of the week it is! Pop in for a night of midweek fun, great tunes and cheap drinks in the company of DJ Mike Emery and the rest of the venue's team. It may be a school night, but a cheeky drink or two won't hurt, will it? We'll be seeing you on the dancefloor!

MISSING - BIRMINGHAM



BIRMINGHAM

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS Shake your tail feathers at Sidewalks new 2 for 1 cocktail menu.
SIDEWALK

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS - Sunday to Friday All day & night Wind down after work with a cocktail or two

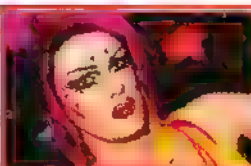
THE LOFT LOUNGE

2 GOOD 2 MISS Drinks from just £2 with DJ Mike Emery

IT'S COCKTAIL TIME AT THE LOFT LOUNGE!

Rather than heading out for a pint or a double vodka and coke, why not opt for a cocktail? Or better still, how about two? The Loft Lounge in Birmingham is offering two gorgeous cocktails for the price of one! If you're hungry, why not grab a bite to eat as well?

THE LOFT LOUNGE - BIRMINGHAM



WITH CHARLOTTE!

Pop along to Birmingham's Village Inn and show off your karaoke skills to Charlotte the Charlotte and DJ Deano. You may not walk away with a million pound recording contract, but you can walk away with a sense of pride!

THE VILLAGE INN - COVENTRY

MISSING BAR

C FACTOR - with Charlotte the Charlotte
THE VILLAGE INN

DEANO'S DANCE AND FREE FOOD

THE FOX

WACKY WEDNESDAYS

BAR JESTER

WEDNESDAY LINE Line Dancing

THE VILLAGE INN

WEST MIDLANDS

STUDENT CLUB NIGHT

THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

WACKY WEDNESDAYS

RAINBOWS, COVENTRY

EAST MIDLANDS

GAMES NIGHT

NEW FORESTERS, NOTTINGHAM

KARAOKE

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

OUT

NG3 NOTTINGHAM

GAMES NIGHT AT THE NEW FORESTERS

If you're looking for something to do in Nottingham on a Wednesday night, then head down to The New Foresters for free pool and cheap drink!

THE NEW FORESTERS - NOTTS

CHARLIE HIDES

There's a brand new attraction coming to Birmingham's Eden Bar on Thursday 19 March - the one and only Charlie Hides!

You might know Charlie from his Laquisha Jonz cabaret show - but more recently the TV and Internet star has scored massive hits with his parodies of Cher, Madonna and Lady Gaga. He is certainly a show worth watching!



BIRMINGHAM

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS - Sunday to Friday All day & night Wind down after work with a cocktail or two

THE LOFT LOUNGE

CHARLIE HIDES Thurs 19 Mar Live cabaret with TV and internet star Charlie Hides
EDEN

CULT Bringing dirty house back home Top Floor from 10pm
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

DJ DEANO On the decks Happy

Hour 12noon-2am
THE VILLAGE INN

DROP THE BOMB start of your weekend £1.50 on all bombs (excluding the Gutterbomb, with our resident DJ Rowan)

I <3 THE 90S with DJ Dan. Open from 6pm
THE FOX

LA VOIX Thurs 12 Mar Live cabaret with Britain's Got Talent star La Voix and her Ja Va Joom boys
EDEN

MISS MARTY'S MADHOUSE Songs, Games and Happy Hour until 2am. With Miss Marty and DJ Deano
THE VILLAGE INN



GET POUNDED

Every Thursday at The Nightingale sees the students of Birmingham's gay scene head down for the biggest party in the city. Cheap drinks and £5 entry is a great start to this incredible night out!

POUNDED £5 entry Drinks from a £1 DJ Corey playing chart dance and urban on Ground Floor Miss Marty and DJ Craig with all the pop and cheese you could ask for on the middle floor
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

THROWBACK THURSDAY £1.20 bombs. With DJ Mykeel (Closed Christmas Day Thu 25th Dec)
MISSING BAR

DJ DANNY'S DOLLAR KARAOKE

THE FOX

MARTY'S

THE VILLAGE INN

WEST MIDLANDS

MAD COW Get movin' and groovin' Drinks from £1 and Element 105 on the decks
GORGEOUS, WOLVES

CAMP KARAOKE and

THREE FURNACES TELFORD

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

THE LION, WALSALL

THE BELL, STOURBRIDGE

THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

EAST MIDLANDS

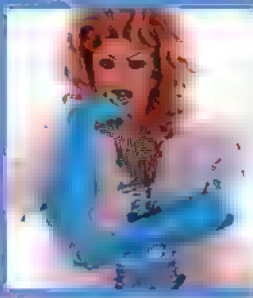
2 TILL 2 Open from 2pm

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

LIFE IS A CABARET

Birmingham's Village Inn

If you're out on a Friday night and looking for some great entertainment, then look no further than Birmingham's award-winning Village Inn. March sees four great acts take to the stage. Kicking off the month's line-up is camp duo Glitter Lips on Friday the 6th, whilst the following week sees Cassidy Connors dropping in to say hi. Miss Penny gives it her all on Friday the 20th, with the brilliant Sandra wrapping things up on the 27th.



BIRMINGHAM

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS - Sunday to Friday All day & night. Wind down after work with a cocktail or two
THE LOFT LOUNGE

ALL DAY EVERY DAY PRICES DJ Parm, takes over the weekend by playing the best of club classics house R&B and all your favourites. Enjoy all day every day prices too!
MISSING - BIRMINGHAM

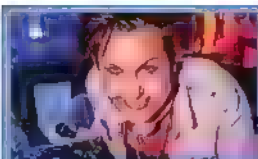
DJ JAMES HOSTS A NIGHT OF PARTY TUNES

Every Friday sees Birmingham's Missing Bar hosting a night of party anthems. Join DJ James from 9pm till late and blast out some of your favourite songs over the speakers! Don't forget - there are great drinks offers too!
MISSING - BIRMINGHAM

BIG GAY FRIDAY Party anthems all night long with Missing's DJ James. Open until the early hours
MISSING BAR

DISCO & KARAOKE with DJ Nikk
EDEN BAR

FREAKY FRIDAY with DJ Lotty Big name cabaret at midnight. Open until 6am
Fri 6 Mar Kruger Sisters
Fri 13 Mar Loia Lasagne
Fri 20 Mar Mison of a Tulu
Fri 27 Mar Sandra
THE VILLAGE INN



INFUSION

Join DJ Corey every Friday night for Infusion. Corey will be playing the best anthems and floorfillers on the scene. Drinks are from £2 all night long - and it's £2 entry all night long too!

INFUSION Free Entry. Absolute Anthems and Floor Fillers with DJ Corey. Drinks from £2 Admission £2
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

KICK START Kick start the weekend from 9pm till the early hours. Hosted by James
MISSING BAR

L&R With Charlotte the Harlotte Open until 6am every Friday
THE VILLAGE INN



LIP GLOSS

The first Friday of every month (6 March) sees Birmingham's trans* community, their friends and admirers come together for a night of fun at the city's popular Eden Bar! So grab a friend and pop along for a fun night!

LIP GLOSS - Fri 6 Mar - With new host Miss Penny. Live entertainment from Sam Buca and stripper Extreme
EDEN BAR

MIDSBEAR MEET-UP AT EDEN BAR

Friday 20 March sees the monthly Midsbears meet-up take place at Birmingham's Eden Bar. If you've not been before, it's a monthly social group for Bears and their admirers. It's a great night out, so be sure to pop along!

MIDSBEARs - Fri 20 Mar - Christmas Party monthly meet up and social group for Bears and Admirers
EDEN BAR

OLD SKOOL GARAGE The first

Friday of the month sees the Nightingale go back in time, playing some of the best in old skool garage. A night not to be missed
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

SAATHI - Fri 27 Mar - Every last Friday monthly. South Asian Gay and Lesbian club night Bollywood and Bhangra
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

SING STAR SUPERSTAR with DJ Nikk every Friday - your chance to win cash
EDEN BAR

VINTAGE FRIDAYS AT THE LOFT LOUNGE

If you're into a bit of old school music, head down to The Loft Lounge in Birmingham every Friday night for a hot helping of Motown, Northern Soul, funk, rock and all of your classic favourites.

THE LOFT LOUNGE - BIRMINGHAM

VINTAGE FRIDAYS a night of soul, funk, rock, motown, Northern Soul and all the classic favourites
THE LOFT LOUNGE

XXL - Fri 20 Mar - Men only night with DJ Christian M. Early Bear offers until 11pm. Every 3rd Friday of each month
THE CORE CLUB

FUNK'D UP playing funky + vocal house 11pm
THE CORE CLUB

CLUB CHIC

KARAOKE Come and have a sing along if you're into it
THE FOX

BEAT THE TITANIUM

BEAT THE TITANIUM

BEAT THE TITANIUM

WEST MIDLANDS

LUSH & YOLO! 1st Fri monthly. Drinks from £1 until midnight, with resident DJs
GORGEOUS CLUB, WOLVERHAMPTON

TV PARTY NIGHT A Men's Night

for TVs. Cross Dressers and Admirers. Every Friday night at
THE GREENHOUSE, DARLSTON

THE LION, WALSALL

THE LION, WALSALL

CLUB NIGHT Drink promos u
F

THE THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

FREE ENTRY FRIDAYS Start the
F

RAINBOWS, COVENTRY

FRIDAY SOCIAL with [F

THE BELL, STOURBRIDGE

KARAOKE with DJ Shawn and D

THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

START THE WEEKEND F
ion before 11pm. Tanya H
rel show from 1pm

PINK, STOKE ON TRENT

TFI FRIDAY A

BREWERY TAP, WORCESTER

EAST MIDLANDS

CLUB NIGHT with DJ. Rot

HELSINKI, LEICESTER

PINK POUNDER E

with DJ. Grad T. E

THE BUCKLE, WOLVERHAMPTON

VALUE FRIDAY Disco 9pm-4am

NEW FORESTERS, NOTTINGHAM

ONE WILKINS, STRETTON F

in

NG1, NOTTINGHAM

XXL brings all the bears to the yard in Birmingham

Every third Friday of the month sees the Midlands' biggest men-only night take place at The Core in Birmingham. Join DJ Christian M for a great night out with the men of the Midlands on Friday the 20th.

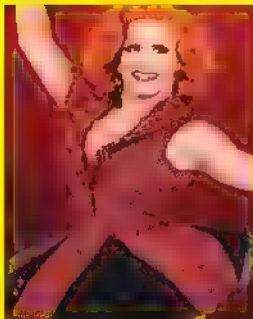


Celebrating seven years of Eden with **MARY MAC!**

How time flies! Can you believe that this month sees the seventh birthday of popular Birmingham venue Eden Bar? And to celebrate the occasion, Mary Mac is making a welcome return to the venue on Saturday 28 March.

With a great voice and hilarious quips aplenty, she'll make sure you have a night out to remember. It's free entry too - and there's also a special guest whose identity is yet to be revealed. Oh how we love a mystery! Happy birthday to everyone at Eden Bar!

EDEN - BIRMINGHAM



BIRMINGHAM

DJ DAN TAKES YOU BACK TO THE '80s

If you fancy turning back the clock thirty-odd years, then head down to Eden Bar in Birmingham, where DJ Dan takes it back to the 1980s. Expect some of the biggest tunes from the decade, not to mention cheap drinks promotions! **EDEN - BIRMINGHAM**

80s HITS with DJ Dan from 2am to 5am. Back to the 80s with cheap drink promotions.
EDEN BAR

THE ATTIC Available for hire. Call the venue for more info: 0121 622 4256

MISSING BAR

BACK TO THE 80s 2am - 4am
EDEN BAR

IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE INN

Saturday is without doubt the biggest night of the week at The Village Inn in Birmingham. You've got two floors of partying - and a great range of music, to boot. You'd be mad not to pop in and party the night away!
THE VILLAGE INN - BIRMINGHAM

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT Over 2 floors. 3 DJs. Open till 8am. With DJ Lotty & DJ Richard Moon. With DJ Tonia in The Village underground.
THE VILLAGE INN

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT Every Saturday with loads of drinks promotions.
NIGHTINGALE CLUB

BIRMINGHAM BULLS RFC
FUNDRAISER WITH MARY MAC 7 Mar Live cabaret from the amazing Mary Mac and an evening of fundraising for Birmingham Bulls RFC.

EDEN

CHARLI CX Sat 28 Mar The popular female vocalist performs live at The Nightingale performing her hit track Boom Clap and more.
THE NIGHTINGALE

CULT Bringing dirty house back home. Top Floor from 10pm.
NIGHTINGALE CLUB



HAUS OF EDWARDS DEBUT IN BRUM

There's been a great response from the public to The Nightingale's RuPaul's Drag Race guests over the past few months. Next up are top trio Haus Of Edwards on Sat 14 Mar.

THE NIGHTINGALE

HAUS OF EDWARDS Sat 14 Feb The RuPaul's Drag Race trio hit Birmingham. A great night out for all RuPaul fans. Meet and greet tickets available.
THE NIGHTINGALE

KARAOKE & COCKTAILS In The Attic plus music from across the decades.
MISSING

L8R With Charlotte the Harlot. Open until 8am every Saturday.
THE VILLAGE INN

EDEN'S 7TH BIRTHDAY WITH MARY MAC Sat 28 Mar Live cabaret from the amazing Mary Mac and a special guest to be announced.
EDEN

SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY with DJ Mykee playing the best party tunes. Featuring Twiggy and sexy door boys. Open until 4am.
MISSING BAR

SATURDAY SESSIONS With DJ Simon Baker from 8pm.
THE LOFT LOUNGE

SATURDAY SESSIONS WITH SIMON BAKER

Every Saturday night sees veteran DJ Simon Baker take to the decks at The Loft Lounge in Birmingham, ensuring your evening gets off to a great start. It's the perfect way to relax - or to get the party started!

THE LOFT LOUNGE - BIRMINGHAM

SATURS-FACTION Welcome in the weekend with resident DJ playing the best of everything.
SIDEWALK

SWAGGERLICIOUS Every Saturday night (Room 4)
NIGHTINGALE CLUB



FRAT PARTY AT BRUM'S SIDEWALK

The ever-popular Sidewalk Bar is this month offering a taste of America in the form of a Frat Party. Think American Pie-style partying with jelly shots and more! Who's dressing up as a cheerleader, then?

THE LOFT LOUNGE

FRAT PARTY Sat 28 Mar Sidewalk are bringing Birmingham a stereotypical American Frat Party - expect red cups and jelly shots.
THE LOFT LOUNGE

THE BREAKFAST CLUB Every Saturday
CLUB CHIC

DJ NIKKI 1st Sat monthly
EQUATOR BAR

DJ PARTY NIGHT Open from 3pm
THE FOX

#JUST SAYING

THE WELLINGTON

KARAOKE Every Sat night
THE WELLINGTON

WEST MIDLANDS

CAMP & SLAG 8pm-6am. Drinks from £1.50 until midnight. DJ Phill Gardner until 2.30am then Siag residents until sunrise.
GORGEOUS, WULVERHAMPTON

BIG NIGHT OUT 8pm-1am
THE LOFT LOUNGE

THE LION, WALSALL

CLUB NIGHT Drink promos until 4.45. Free entry before 11pm.
THE THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT 8pm-1am
THE LOFT LOUNGE

RAINBOWS, COVENTRY

INCLUSION with b...
THE BEL, STOURBRIDGE

GET TO THE POINT 8pm-1am
THE LOFT LOUNGE

PINK, STONE ON TRENT

EAST MIDLANDS

BE MIDDON PARTY NIGHT 8pm till 6am. Free entry before 1pm. £3 before 1am and after.
THE BOTTLE, NOTTINGHAM

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT 8pm-1am
THE LOFT LOUNGE

THE LOFT LOUNGE

CLUB NIGHT With DJ Nik B. 8pm-1am. Free entry before 11pm. £3 before 1am and after.
HELSINKI, LEICESTER

CHARLI CX heads to Brum superclub The Nightingale

Following the last-minute cancellation of her scheduled appearance at The Nightingale back in January, Charli CX this month visits the venue for a live PA (on Saturday 28 March). Charli rose to fame when hit single Boom Clap reached the top ten in 2014. We'll be seeing you on the dancefloor!
THE NIGHTINGALE - BIRMINGHAM



LIVE CABARET at The Village Inn with Mrs Mills and more

If you're a big fan of cabaret, and Friday night at The Village Inn wasn't enough for you, fear not - the popular Hurst Street venue hosts cabaret on Sunday nights too! This month's stars are: Mrs Mills (Sun 1 Mar), Linda Matthews (Sun 8 Mar), Scarlett Tiara (Sun 15 Mar), Marty (Sun 22 Mar) and the Divine Miss M (Sun 29 Mar). Plus, it's happy hour till 10pm, so get down there and end the week with a laugh!

THE VILLAGE INN - BIRMINGHAM



BIRMINGHAM

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS Sunday to Friday All day & night Wind down after work with a cocktail or two
THE LOFT LOUNGE

DISCO & KARAOKE with DJ Nikk Every Sunday
EDEN BAR

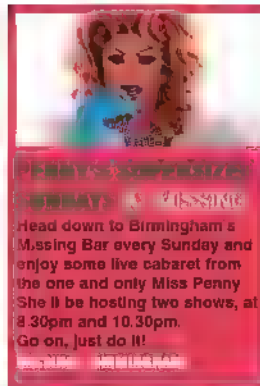
MISS PENNY'S SUPERSIZE SUNDAYS Cabaret every Sunday hosted by the one and only Miss Penny on stage at 8.30pm and 10.30pm
MISSING BAR

SUNDAY BREAKFAST The perfect hangover cure from 9am. Just £7.95. Carvery from 12noon for just £9.95

THE LOFT LOUNGE

SUNDAY LUNCHEON & LIVE CABARET with Mrs Mills and DJ Deano Plus Bingo with Mrs Mills from 7pm **Sun 1 Mar** Mrs Mills **Sun 8 Mar** Linda Matthews **Sun 15 Mar** Scarlett Tiara **Sun 22 Mar** Marty **Sun 29 Mar** Divine Miss M
THE VILLAGE INN

SUPER SUNDAY DINNER served from 1pm Cure that hangover and choose from a variety of meats



with all the best bits of a roast for only £6.95
SIDEWALK

CHILL OUT

THE FOX

SUNDAY IS FUNDAY with Bar 1+1 1pm-late
THE JAGGER

THREE COURSE LUNCH only £7.50
THE WELLINGTON

WEST MIDLANDS

MARTY'S PARTY 9pm-4am Fun &

Games Karaoke. Prizes and all round mayhem. Drinks from £2
GORGEOUS, WOLVERHAMPTON

CHILL OUT After the bar
RAINBOWS, COVENTRY

THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

for chill Drag host and party

LION BAR & CLUB, WALSLEY

QUEENS OF DRAG with DJ

THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

RAINBOW PARTY NIGHT

THREE FURNACES, TELFORD

SUNDAY ROAST Served from 2pm
THE WHITE HART, WOLVERHAMPTON

EAST MIDLANDS

BRUNCH CLUB Brunch for £2

RAINBOW & DOVE, LEICESTER

KARAOKE & DISCO 7pm-2am
NEW FORESTERS, NOTTINGHAM

KARAOKE WITH T 9pm-late

THE BOSTON, NORTHAMPTON

FRAT Party!

SAT 28TH MAR 2015

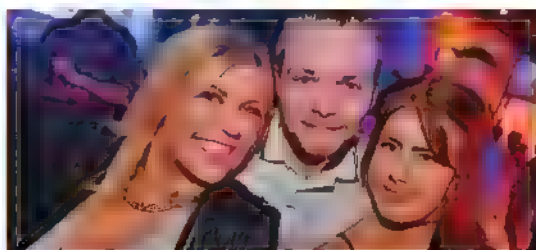
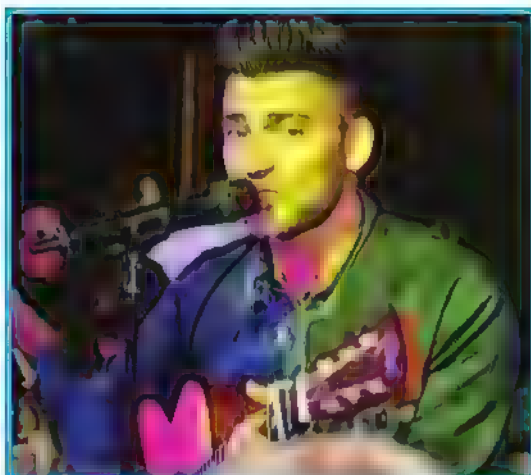
DRINKS OFFERS
JAGERBOMBS £1.50
BUDWEISER £2.50
VODKA JELLY SHOTS £1
GIANT FISHBOWLS £15

VODKA, BLUE CURACAO, GOMME SYRUP, TOPPED WITH LEMONADE
DECORATED WITH SLICES OF LEMON AND CANDIES

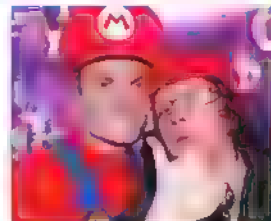
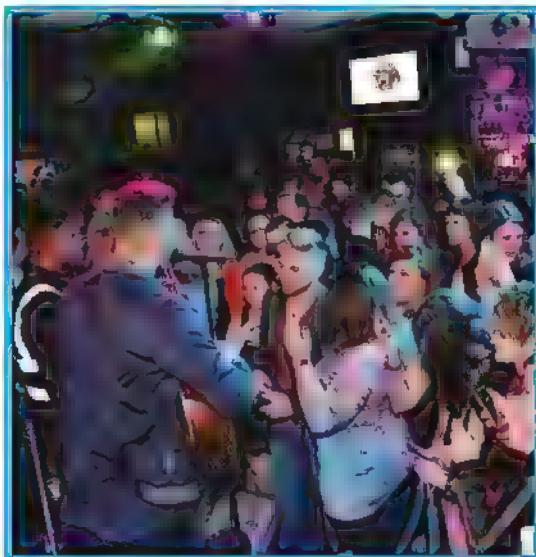
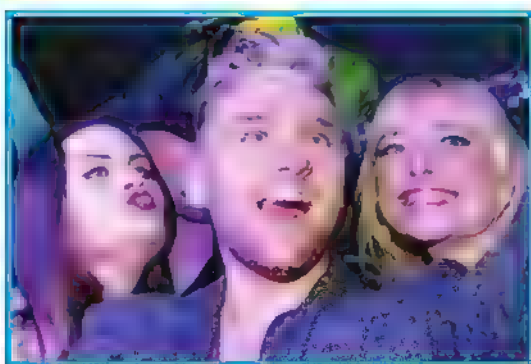
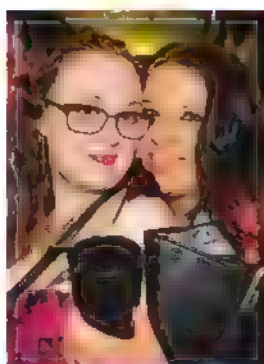
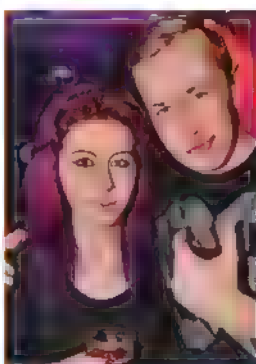
SIDEWALK

125-131 HURST STREET • BIRMINGHAM • B5 6SE

Wolverhampton's **Gorgeous Bar** has the X Factor!



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Pictures by Capture Photography

THE ANNUAL
MIDLANDS
ZONE

READERS' AWARDS

2015

You voted in your thousands and
now it's time to announce the winners!

**BEST GAY BAR | BEST GAY CLUB
BEST LGBT EVENT | BEST CABARET ACT
AND MANY, MANY MORE!**

Featuring
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT & AFTER PARTIES AROUND THE GAY VILLAGE

FRIDAY 20 MARCH

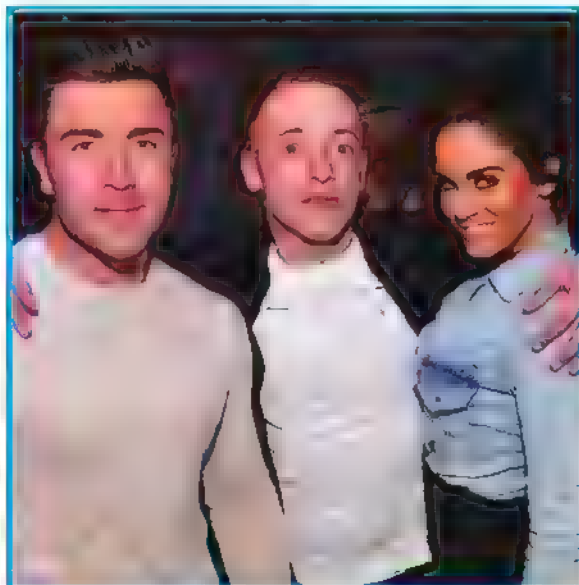
AT THE NIGHTINGALE CLUB, BIRMINGHAM

DOORS OPEN AT 7PM ■ READERS' AWARDS AT 8PM

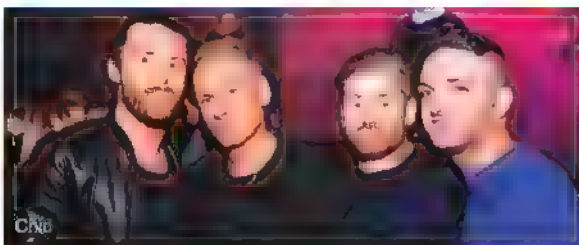
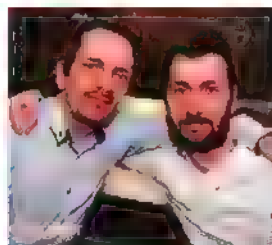
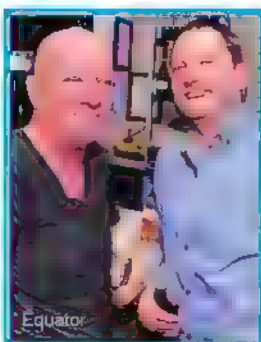
Free Admission

Visit www.MidlandsZone.co.uk for more information

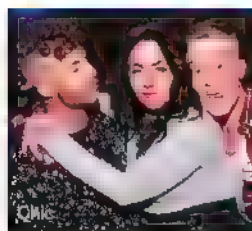
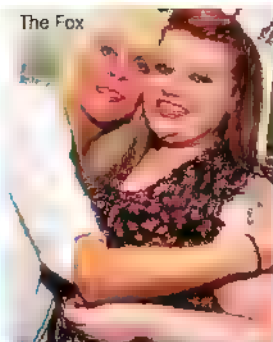
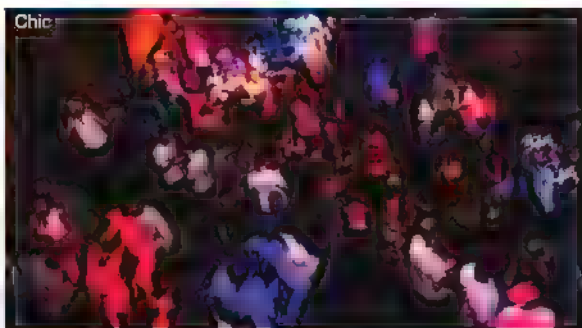
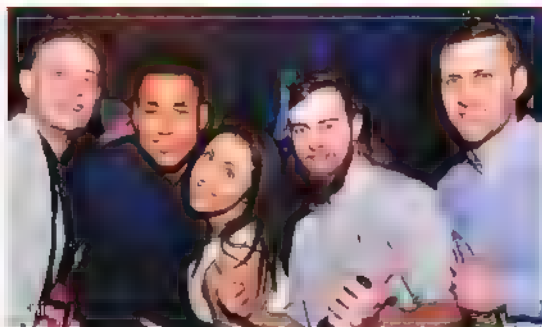
Out and about around Birmingham's Gay Village...



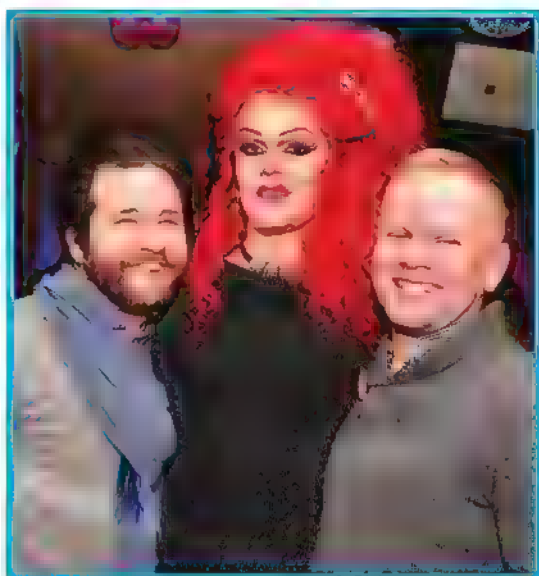
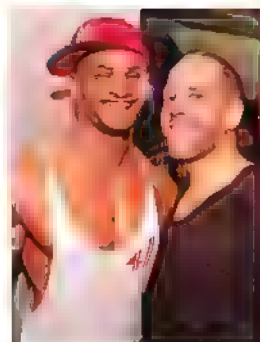
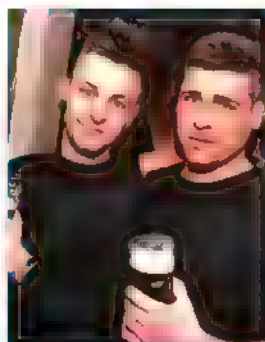
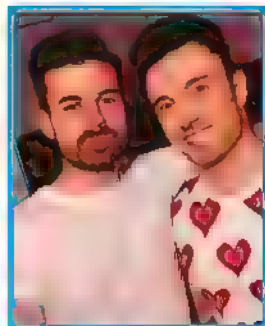
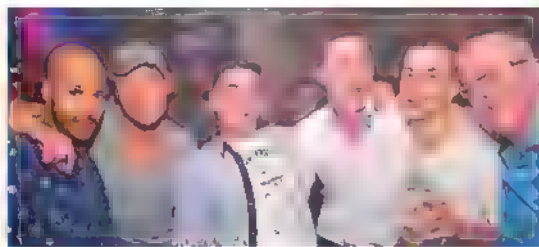
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Party through till 8am at Birmingham's **Village Inn!**



THE VILLAGE INN

March

6TH

Kruger Sisters

13TH

Lola Lasagne

20TH

Son of a tuta

27TH

Sandra



FRIDAY TILL 6AM
SATURDAY TILL 8AM

WWW.VILLAGEBIRMINGHAM.CO.UK

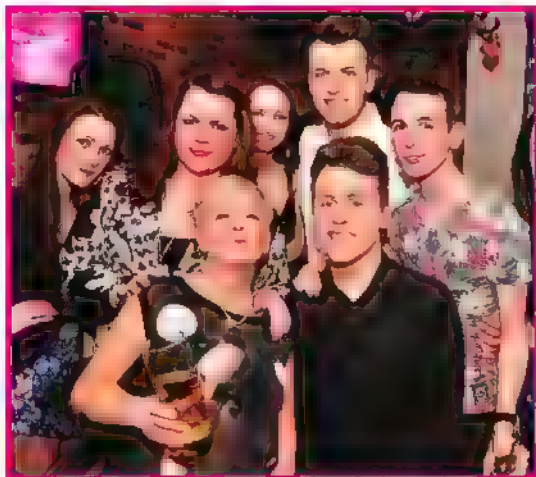
VILLAGEINNBMINGHAM

@VILLAGEBRUM

THEVILLAGEBIRMINGHAM

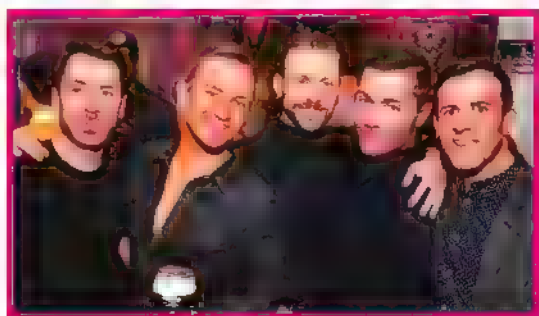
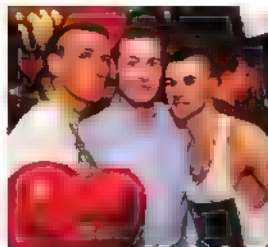
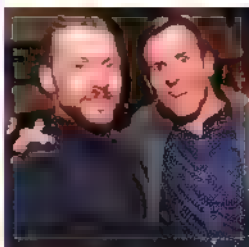
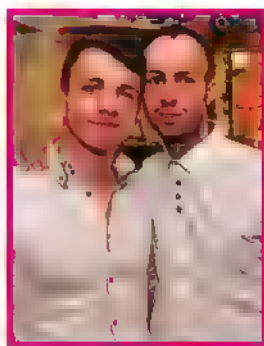


Cocktails and fizz at Birmingham's Loft Lounge

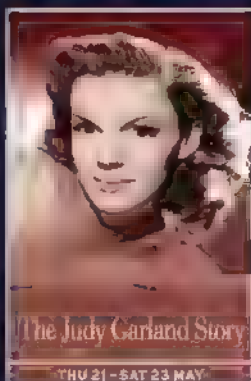
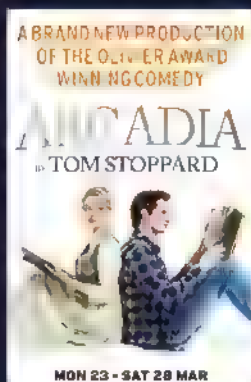


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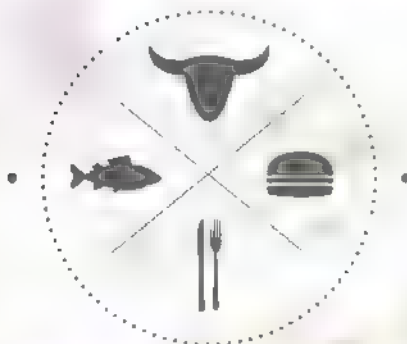


Photos by Laura Byrne



NEW ALEXANDRA THEATRE
BIRMINGHAM
WORLD CLASS THEATRE

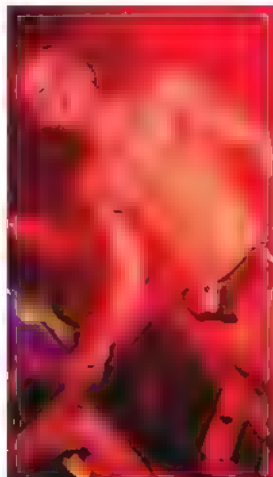
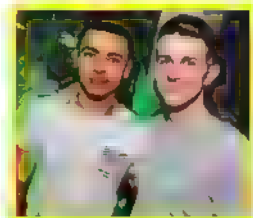
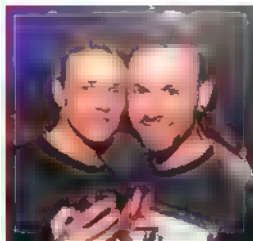
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GROUPS 10+ 0844 871 3031
www.atgtickets.com/birmingham



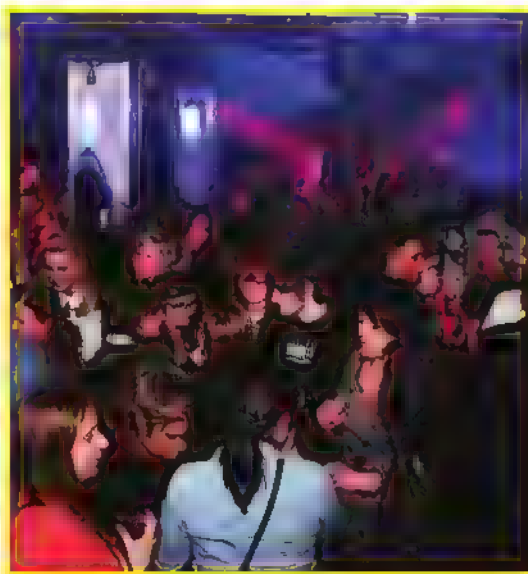
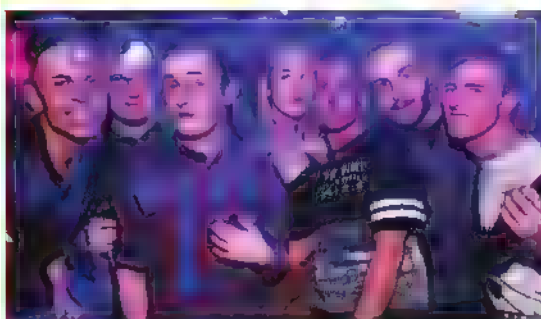
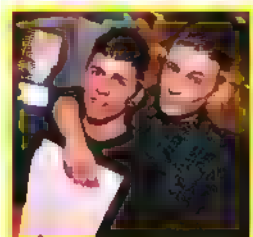
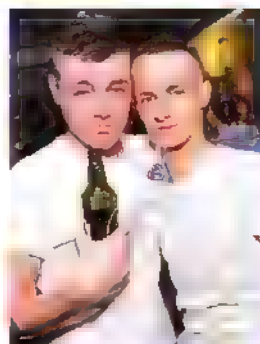
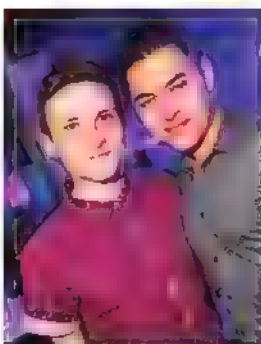
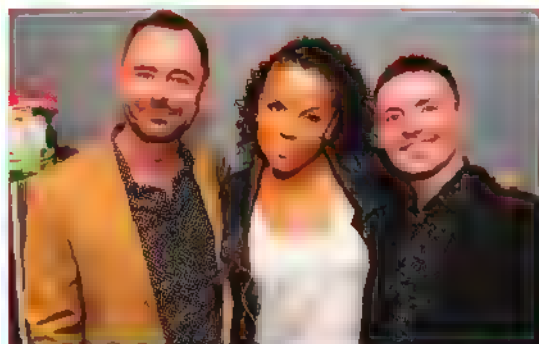
loft.birmingham
@loftlounge2
loftbirmingham

0121 622 2444

Ms Dynamite explodes at Birmingham's **Nightingale**

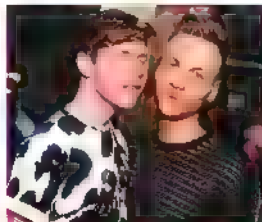
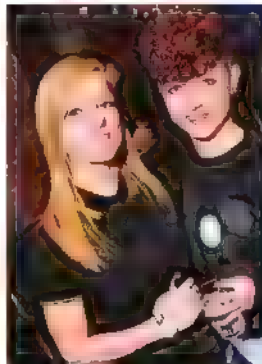


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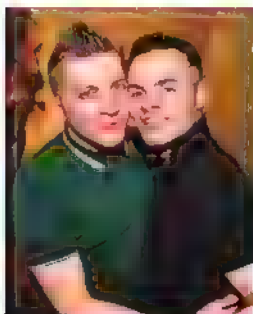
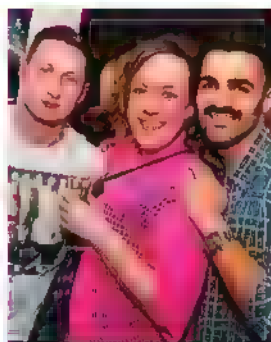
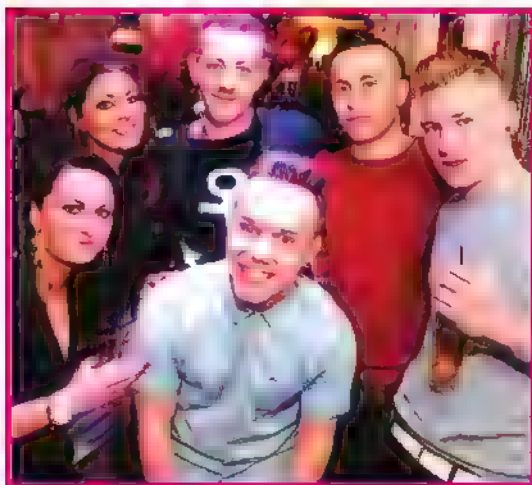


Images by Laura Byrne

Get a taste of San Francisco at Birmingham's Sidewalk



Party the night away at Birmingham's **Missing**





MISS PENNY'S EASTER SUNDAY EGG HUNT

WITH DOUBLE CABARET
AT 8.30PM & 10.30PM

SUNDAY
5TH APRIL

EASTER EGG
TOMBOLA



EVERY
MONDAY NIGHT
1 DRINKS
WITH DJ MIKE EMERY
BIRMINGHAM'S GAYEST MONDAY NIGHT PARTY



TUESDAY NIGHTS
WITH
DJ JAMES

Wednesdays are
**2 GOOD
2 MISS!**
£2
£2.60



Missing
#throwback
thursdays
£1.50 BOMBS ALL NIGHT &
SELECTED DRINKS FROM £1.50
WITH
DJ MYKEE

**BIG
GAY**
WITH DJ JAMES

**SATURDAY
NIGHT
PARTY**

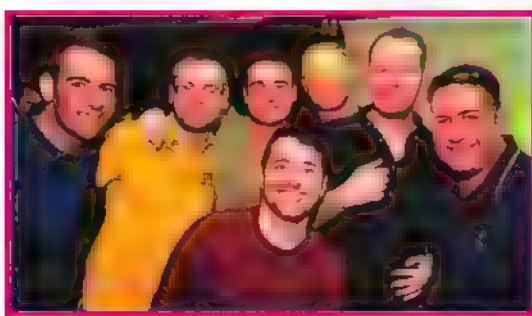
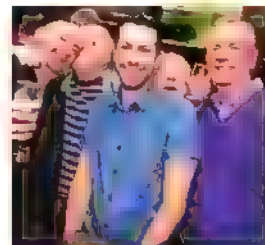
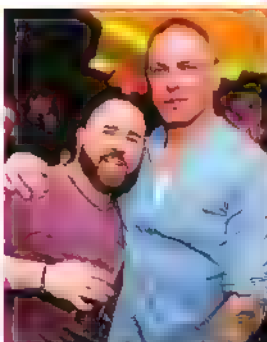
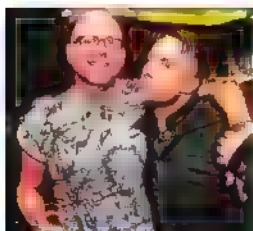
DOUBLE CABARET
SHOWTIME AT 8.30PM & 10.30PM

MISS PENNY'S
**SUPERSIZE
SUNDAYS**

Missing

MISSING BAR, 48 BROMSGROVE STREET, SOUTHSIDE,
BIRMINGHAM, B5 6NU. CALL 0121 622 4256. EMAIL INFO@MISSINGBAR.CO.UK

Birmingham's **Eden Bar** is a hit with the men!



edenedeneden

EDEN MARCH

edenedeneden

Open from 2pm every day 116 Sherlock Street Birmingham B5 8NB 0121 622 1953 | www.theedenbar.co.uk

Fri 6th

Entertainment Sam Buca

Lip Gloss

with NEW host
MISS PENNY!

Stripper EXTREME



Sat 7th

with entertainment from



vs



MARY MAC



Thur 12th

an
evening
with

La Voix

exclusive to eden



Thur 19th

Brand New &
Exclusive to Eden
in Birmingham
Internet & TV Star
CHARLIE HIDES



Sat 28th

with MARY MAC



and SPECIAL GUEST

Eden's 7th Birthday

Fri 20th

EVERY THURS

EVERY FRI & SUN

EVERY SAT



MidsBears
Monthly Meet
in the Marquee
Special Drinks
Offers All Night



90s HITS WITH
DJ DAN
GREAT ATMOSPHERE

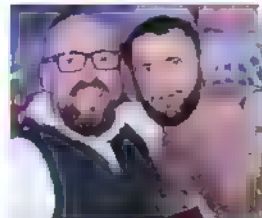
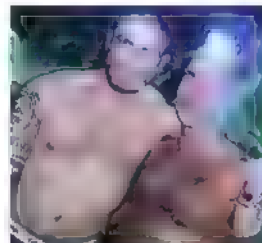
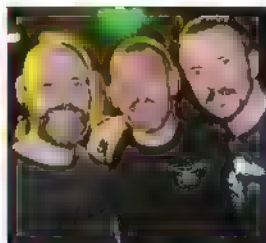


KARAOKE &
DISCO DJ NIKKI
COME ALONG & SING
WITH A FRIENDLY
REGULAR CROWD



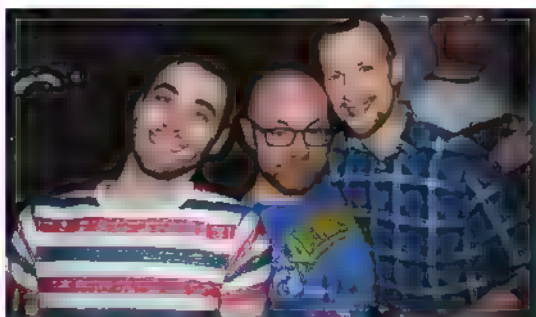
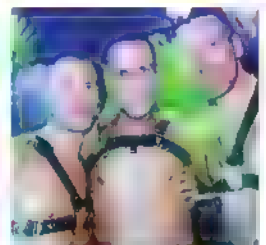
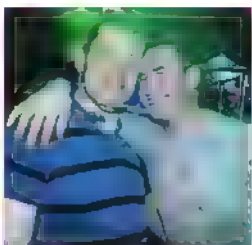
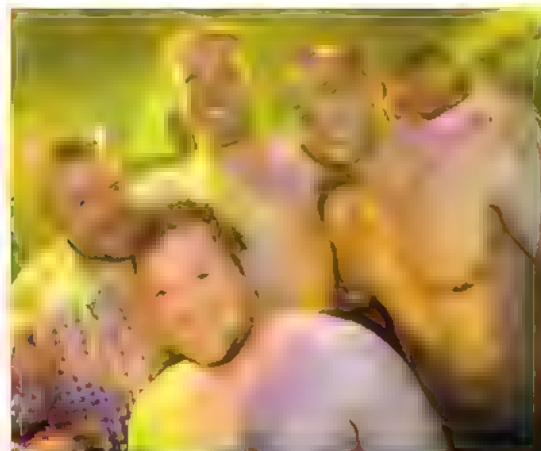
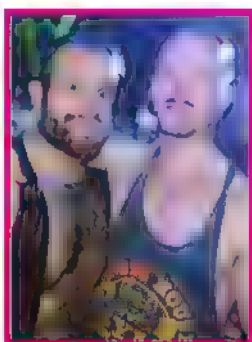
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Saturday Night Fever

Tony Manero knows there has to be more to life than he's got - an unremarkable existence in New York City with family and friends who've accepted their lot and expect him to do the same.

But there's flat chance of Tony doing that; he's way too busy living his very own American dream, hitting Manhattan's nightspots with dancing partner Stephanie Mangano and strutting his funky stuff.

The mother of all disco shows, Saturday Night Fever pulsates to the music of the Bee Gees' famous soundtrack. Classic hits like Stayin' Alive, Jive Ta Kin', Night Fever, If I Can't Have You and Tragedy guarantee an evening of flares-flapping fun for anyone who's ever enjoyed the pumping sounds of the disco dancefloor.

In short, you can expect to find yourself well and truly, er, Lost In Music...
New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 17 - Sat 21 March



Gina Yashere

Gina's latest show comprises what she terms 'all her best bits' - and there are certainly a fair few of those to appreciate. She's best known from shows like Mock The Week and has worked with Lenny Henry. A well-received performance on JS TV's Last Comic Standing has taken her career in another direction of late, with plenty of work now coming her way from across the pond.

Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 6 March,
MAC, Birmingham, Sat 21 March, Nottingham Playhouse
Thurs 9 April



**READ THE
INTERVIEW**
Turn to p12 & 13
NOW!

Beautiful Thing: A Love Story

Jonathan Harvey's award-winning play tells the story of teenager Jamie's relationship with his classmate and neighbour Ste.

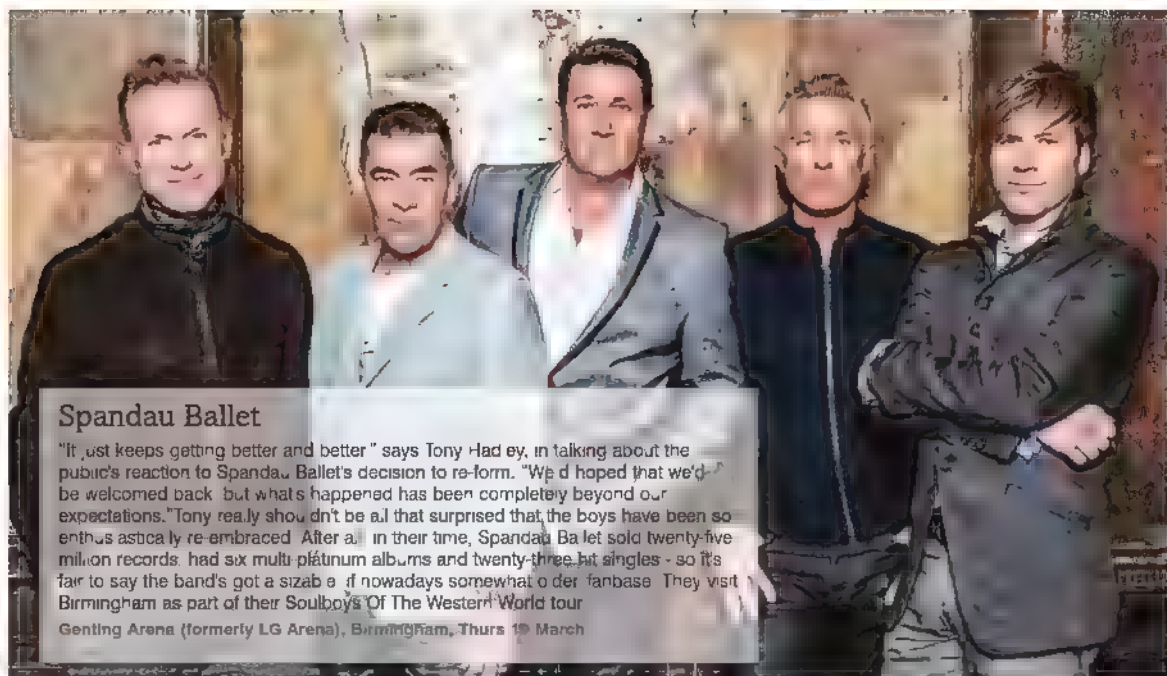
Numerous well-known actors have appeared in Beautiful Thing during its twenty-year history - among them Jonny Lee Miller, Suranne Jones, Hugh Bonneville, Philip Glenister, Andrew Garfield and Rhys Ifans - while productions have been mounted in countries including China, France, Canada, Australia and Holland.

EastEnders actors Charlie Brooks and Thomas Law star in this latest version of the play, and are joined by Sam Thomas from Channel Four's hit teen drama, Skins.

The Patrick Centre, Birmingham
Hippodrome,
Mon 30 March - Sat 11 April,

Nottingham Playhouse,
Tue 21 April - Sat 9 May,

Curve Studio, Leicester,
Mon 25 - Sat 30 May



Spandau Ballet

"It just keeps getting better and better" says Tony Hadley, in talking about the public's reaction to Spandau Ballet's decision to re-form. "We'd hoped that we'd be welcomed back but what's happened has been completely beyond our expectations." Tony really shouldn't be all that surprised that the boys have been so enthusiastically re-embraced. After all, in their time, Spandau Ballet sold twenty-five million records, had six multi-platinum albums and twenty-three hit singles - so it's fair to say the band's got a sizable if nowadays somewhat older fanbase. They visit Birmingham as part of their Soulboys Of The Western World tour.

Genting Arena (formerly LG Arena), Birmingham, Thurs 19 March



Ameriie

Grammy-nominated soulstress Ameriie makes a long-awaited return to The Drum with a full live band and a big back-catalogue. Her show blends hits from her thirteen year career (including One Thing, Why Don't We Fall In Love and All I Have) with brand new material from her forthcoming album, *Bar* - a project in which she's completely immersed herself.

"I can't help but be heavily involved," she recently explained to officialcharts.com. "That's just my personality. The reason I do it is because I love to be able to express myself through the music, so I can't see it being any other way."

The Drum, Birmingham, Sat 28 March



Lionel Richie

Boasting in excess of one hundred million album sales, a Golden Globe, numerous Grammy Awards and the Crystal Award for Humanitarianism, Lionel Richie is a twenty-four carat superstar. This latest concert - *All The Hits All Night Long* - blends new material with old. Undoubtedly on the playlist will be classics such as Hello, Dancing On The Ceiling and Endless Love, as well as mega-hits from his Commodore days, like Easy, Brickhouse and Three Times A Lady. Richie was recently confirmed for Glastonbury 2015's legends slot, which has previously been filled by the likes of Dolly Parton, Tony Christie and James Brown.

Barclaycard Arena (formerly NIA), Birmingham, Sat 14 March



Appropriate Behaviour

CERT 15 (90 mins)

Starring **Desiree Akhavan, Rebecca Henderson, Scott Adels, Halley Feiffer** Directed by **Desiree Akhavan** (USA)

'Extraordinary' is shown to be the new ordinary in this 'ironic' Iranian hipster date movie from writer/director actress Desiree Akhavan. Akhavan takes the lead role of Shirin, a young woman struggling to find acceptance from those around her. Her family don't know she's bisexual, her ex-girlfriend doesn't understand why she won't tell them, and she can't even get the attention of the ADD youngsters in her moviemaking class. Add into the mix the fact that her brother's about to wed a parentally approved 'prize catch' and there's little wonder Shirin embarks on a journey of private rebellion... **Out 6 March**



The Signal

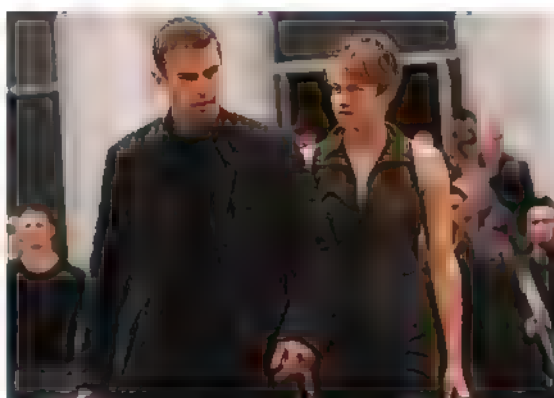
CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Brenton Thwaites, Olivia Cooke, Beau Knapp, Lin Shaye, Laurence Fishburne** Directed by **William Eubank** (USA)

On a road trip to California, three MIT students find themselves taunted by a hacker going by the moniker of NOMAD. When they decide to confront NOMAD and locate his lair - they are transported into an entirely surreal situation.

The scriptwriters (and brothers) William and Cariye Eubank have said that they were drawn to the material by a fascination with "the conflict between logic and emotion." Be afraid.

We Think... **Out 27 March**



The Divergent Series: Insurgent

CERT tbc

Starring **Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Octavia Spencer, Jai Courtney, Miles Teller, Naomi Watts, Kate Winslet** Directed by **Robert Schwentke** (USA)

Divergent, the first in Veronica Roth's literary trilogy, was released in April of last year and grossed over \$288million worldwide. Now the second instalment is upon us and maverick Tris Prior (Woodley) continues her fight against the totalitarian state that governs a dystopian Chicago of the future. Hunger Games fans can lap this up while they wait patiently for Mockingjay Part 2 in 3D... **Out 20 March**

Get Hard

CERT tbc

Starring **Will Ferrell, Kevin Hart, Alison Brie, Edwina Findley, Craig T Nelson** Directed by **Etan Cohen** (USA)

When millionaire businessman James King (Will Ferrell) is sent down for ten years for tax evasion, he's not sure he's ready for prison. So he hires Darrel Lewis (Kevin Hart) to help prepare him for a life behind bars. If he's gonna survive, he's gotta get hard... **Out 27 March**



Kill The Messenger

CERT 15 (112 mins)

Starring **Jeremy Renner, Rosemarie DeWitt, Ray Liotta, Barry Pepper, Oliver Platt, Michael Sheen, Andy Garcia** Directed by **Michael Cuesta** (USA)

A true story: when, in the mid-1990s, a reporter exposes the CIA plot to arm the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, he becomes the victim of a vicious smear campaign.

And we thought the CIA could do no wrong. **Out 6 March**



DVDs

The Imitation Game (12)



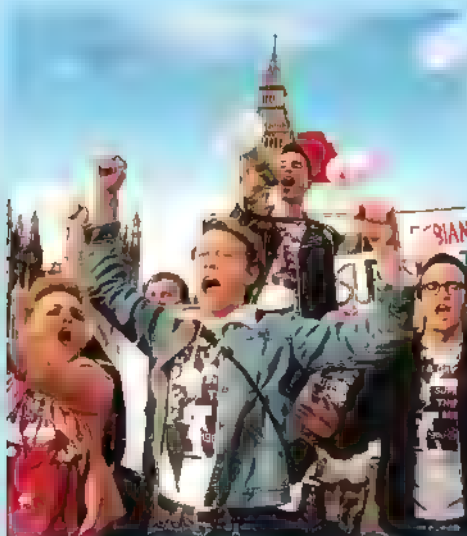
Sherlock star Benedict Cumberbatch here plays Alan Turing, the gay 'father of computer science'.

Based on the biography, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, by Andrew Hodges, the film chronicles Turing's part in winning the Second World War (by helping to crack

the Nazis' Enigma code) and his later criminal prosecution for being homosexual.

The director previously brought us the ingenious, breathless and hugely sexy Norwegian thriller, *Headhunters* (2011). *Out Monday 9 March*

Pride (15)



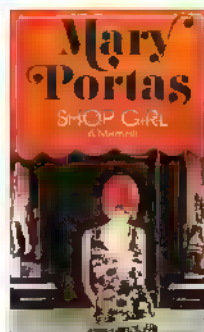
In the summer of 1984 Margaret Thatcher is in power and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is on strike. At the Gay Pride March in London, a group of gay and lesbian activists decide to raise money to support the families of the striking miners. But there's a problem. The Union seems embarrassed to receive their support. Undeterred, the activists decide to ignore the NUM and go direct to the miners. They identify a mining village in Wales and set off in a minibus to make their donation in person. And so begins the extraordinary story of two seemingly alien communities who form a surprising and ultimately triumphant partnership. *Out Monday 2 March*

...and something to read

Shop Girl

by Mary Portas

Young Mary Newton was born into a large Irish family in a small Watford semi. In Mary's family, money was scarce. Clothes were hand-me-downs, holidays a church day out to Hastings and meals were variations on the potato. But these were also good times which revolved around the force of nature that was Mary's mum, Theresa. When tragedy unexpectedly blows this world apart, a new chapter in Mary's life opens up. She takes to the camp and glamour of Harrods window dressing like a duck to water - and Mary, Queen Of Shops, is born.



New Music



Rebel Heart

Madonna

This latest and potentially greatest album from the Queen of Pop features future hit singles co-produced with the likes of Diplo, Kanye West and Blood Diamonds.



Colours

Blue

Older, stronger and wiser, Blue have been together for 15 years and sold over 15 million albums worldwide. The future is certainly looking bright for the boys with the release of this new album. All rise, guys, all rise!

Lady Sings The Blues

Rebecca Ferguson

X Factor runner-up Rebecca Ferguson is back with her third studio album, which has seen her working with some of the musicians Frank Sinatra used to use. Expect a great blues and swing vibe!



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Legal Scene: New Intestacy Rules and You

On 1 October 2014, new laws governing what happens to a person's money if they die without a Will came into force. Here's how they could affect you...

In the biggest legal overhaul since 1925, the Inheritance and Trustees Powers Act 2014 (ITPA 2014) affects how the assets of people who die without a Will are shared between their relatives. Here, Lee Trubshaw, Partner at solicitors Bradin Trubshaw & Kirwan LLP, highlights the key changes. Under the Inheritance and Trustees Powers Act of 2014, spouses and civil partners have new inheritance rights, as do adopted children and other family members. But same-sex couples who live together may be alarmed to discover that they still have no protection whatsoever

The Big Change for Spouses and Civil Partners

Same-sex married couples and civil partners without children are the most affected by the new intestacy rules. Previously, if a

spouse/civil partner died and there were no children, then the first £450,000 of the estate plus half of the remainder went to the surviving spouse/civil partner. The other half was divided up between the deceased's blood relatives, such as their parents or brothers and sisters, which meant that for people with significant assets, their spouse/civil partner would only receive part of the estate and may even have to split ownership of assets such as property. Under the new rules, the surviving spouse/civil partner inherits the entire estate outright. If the deceased leaves children, then the estate has to be shared between the surviving spouse/civil partner and the children. Under the old law, the spouse/civil partner received everything up to £250,000 and was only entitled to a 'life interest'

in one half of the remainder of the estate. This meant that the surviving spouse/civil partner could take income from the money but could not have the capital - with the other half going to the children. From October 2014, the surviving spouse/civil partner still takes the first £250,000, but the addition of 'life interest' means they may now inherit one half of the residue as capital, with any children sharing the remaining half once they reach the age of 18.

The new rules do not affect people who die with less than £250,000 in assets.

Unmarried Same-Sex Couples

It's important for gay cohabitants to be aware that the new intestacy rules do not affect them - they still get nothing where one partner dies without making a Will. Irrespective of how long they have lived together. Unmarried partners are treated as single people so, for example, if one partner dies and there are children, the surviving partner gets nothing and the entire estate passes to the children. The only way to ensure that your estate goes to your partner is to either get married, enter into a civil partnership or make a Will.

The Law and Adopted Children

Under the old intestacy rules, if a person died leaving a child under the age of 18 who was subsequently adopted there was a risk that the child may lose their inheritance from their natural parent. The new legislation has addressed this.

Definition of 'Personal Chattels'

The definition of 'personal chattels' - personal

property also changed on 1 October 2014. The old meaning was archaic and included things like carriages, linen, horses and stable furniture! Under the new rules, 'chattels' include anything that is not monetary, business assets or 'held as an investment'. This could still be a grey area, though, as people see investments, for example collectable items of value, as different things.

The Changes and Wills

Whilst the changes to the intestacy rules will help a surviving spouse or civil partner, they're no substitute for a properly drafted Will, particularly as the intestacy rules may not be the most tax-efficient way to administer your estate. Also, every family situation is different, and only by writing a Will can you ensure that your estate passes on to those you wish to benefit - especially important if you separate from your spouse/civil partner.

For advice on Powers of Attorney, civil partnerships and other legal matters, contact Bradin Trubshaw & Kirwan LLP on 01543 421840 for a consultation, or email lt@btksolicitors.co.uk. For more information, visit www.btkosolicitors.co.uk.

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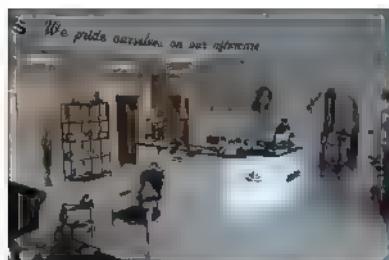
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Lee Trubshaw

Facing up to ageing!

Nobody likes ageing - particularly when the business of growing old starts to leave its visible signs on your face. But fear not - Soul Care Aesthetics in Cannock reckon they've got a treatment that will help you look more youthful. And the best bit? It's not very invasive! Read on to find out more about how you can regain those youthful looks...



The galloping growth of social media has encouraged us all to share pictures of ourselves, on holidays, enjoying events with our friends and families, joining dating websites, and increasingly posting 'selfies'. Many people also digitally upload photographs from the past and add them to their social media accounts as a way of acknowledging important events. These photographs allow us to chronicle our lives and the changes our face goes through over time.

However, a survey conducted by Sinclair IS Pharma found that 76% of people stated that dissatisfaction with their appearance had prevented them from having their photograph taken. Dissatisfaction with appearance had also prevented 32% of women from posting on social media and 27% of men from going on a date!

Ageing is a natural part of life. It happens to us all, but this natural process can be extremely challenging for some of us to accept. Over a fifth of people surveyed stated that appearing to have aged affected their confidence. Just under half of the respondents claimed to be unhappy with their appearance, with 30 to 39 year-olds the least happy group.

Over 25% of those surveyed admitted that they'd judged people because of the way they were ageing.

People want to appear to stay young, but the majority of us want it to seem that this has been achieved naturally (without anyone knowing we've had help!)

This comes as no surprise to the makers of Silhouette Soft, who commissioned the survey to launch their innovative non-invasive face lift. The company is acutely aware that many individuals would like to reduce the signs of ageing discreetly, via a non-surgical treatment which leaves their face completely mobile.

Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed stated facial sagging and wrinkles aged a person the most. There are a number of treatments which aim to minimise the effects of ageing by reducing wrinkles and facial sagging. These include surgery and Botox. However, 80% of those surveyed wouldn't consider having



surgery, mainly due to cost and safety concerns.

"A general anaesthetic for cosmetic appearance would be foolish"

Many people were put off Botox treatment because they felt it didn't leave recipients looking natural. Some even drew attention to people in the media who they felt didn't look natural after the treatment.

"I have seen how some celebs look and no thank you"

Silhouette Soft is an innovative new treatment. Known as the non-invasive face lift, it's designed to redefine the face for those looking for restored volume and reduced wrinkles. The treatment is non-surgical and produces an extremely discrete and natural-looking result, leaving the face completely mobile. It only takes half an hour to perform and the results last up to 18 months.

The effects of the treatment are two-pronged. Combating the signs of ageing requires restoration of the skin, but it also needs a redefining of the shape of a person's face, to combat the gravitational pull around the jawline.

To meet this dual requirement, Silhouette Soft combines two effects: lifting and regenerating.

Silhouette Soft's pioneering technology uses bidirectional absorbable thread cones. Poly(lactic acid) (PLA), the principal component of Silhouette Soft, is a polymer known in the medical field for many years (suture thread, orthopaedic pins, screws and nails for bone fractures are all made from PLA). This polymer is particularly biocompatible in humans and is also completely biodegradable.

The lifting effect is immediate and discreet, as it's the result of compressing and elevating the facial tissue at the time of treatment. The tension of the inserted thread lifts the sagging tissues.

The regenerative effect is gradual and natural.



After insertion, the reabsorbable cones on the thread anchor themselves into the tissues and stimulate the body to produce its own collagen. This action, which continues over time, helps increase the volume of the saggy areas and gradually restores shapeliness to the face, achieving a natural-looking result.

The minimally invasive treatment is performed by a specially trained medical practitioner. Local anaesthetic is applied to the face. Once numb, a Silhouette Soft thread dotted with tiny cones is introduced just under the skin. The whole procedure takes half an hour in duration and patients can resume their routine immediately after treatment. Sometimes there is a small amount of bruising around the entry point. However, this can be covered with minimal make-up immediately after the treatment.

With 55% of those surveyed admitting they would consider an anti-ageing facial treatment if no one knew they'd had it and if there was no downtime, Silhouette Soft treatment at last provides a way to achieve this.

Mr Ian Morgan, Consultant Surgeon, is the lead UK trainer and an international trainer for Silhouette Soft. He has a wealth of experience and knowledge and will be happy to offer a free consultation. A video of the procedure being undertaken can be seen on the home page of www.soulcareaesthetics.com.

Soul Care Aesthetics also offers a wide range of other services including fillers, anti-wrinkle injections, chemical peels, dermaroller, microdermabrasion, skin resurfacing and skin therapies.

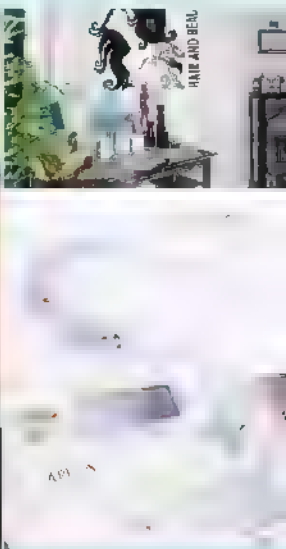
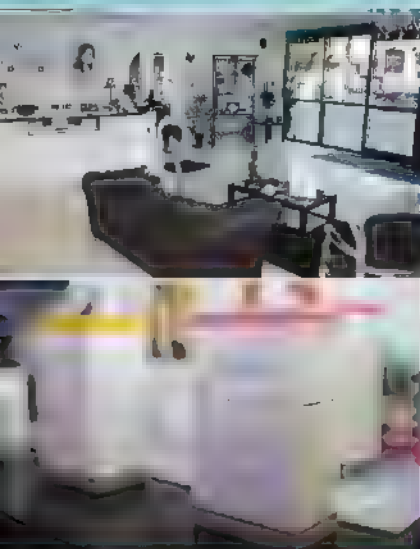
Soul Care Aesthetics are looking for one person to whom they'll offer a free Silhouette Soft treatment - providing the lucky individual is willing to share their experience. Interested parties need to be over 40 years of age and should email a photo and contact details to ismorgan1@yahoo.com.

For more information about Soul Care Aesthetics in Cannock, visit www.soulcareaesthetics.com or call 01543 572838.

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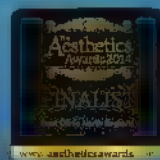
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Barnardo's LGBT adoption and fostering event heading to Dudley this month

A special two-hour fostering and adoption event specifically targeting the LGBT community is being held in Dudley this month

The event is part of LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week, which runs from Monday 2 to Sunday 8 March

The information evening, which takes place from 7.30pm on Monday 9 March, is being held at the Barnardo's Service Office on Trinity Road in Dudley

It will provide information for people who may be interested in adoption and fostering

You're eligible to adopt a child if you're single, married or unmarried, and it doesn't matter what ethnic or religious background you come from

Your sexuality doesn't affect your rights to adopt or foster but you do need to be a homeowner or living in rented accommodation

For more information about the event, call Barnardo's on 01384 458585 or email traceycosman@barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo's has been ranked 30th in this year's top 100 LGBT-friendly organisations in the 2015 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

More information about the charity can be found at www.barnardos.co.uk

Birmingham LGBT asks community to help run its Health & Wellbeing Centre

Birmingham LGBT is asking the community to make donations towards the running of its Health and Wellbeing Centre.

The user-led charity's premises costs £633 per day to run. The Centre provides a hub for the LGBT community in Birmingham and hosts a range of services - from being awareness to older people support. It also acts as a venue for community-led meetings and workshops.

"We've developed a pioneering health and wellbeing centre in Birmingham which has gained national recognition and won multiple awards," says the charity. "We have a range of services and projects, from an older people's befriending service to an empowerment project for young people. We're a Birmingham success story passionate about building a proud, visible and vibrant LGBT community in the city and

beyond

"We are working to develop a vibrant LGBT community in Birmingham in which individuals can realise their full potential and have equal access to everything that the city has to offer. To achieve this, we must sustain and develop our services so that we're always there for the community. We can't do this without your support.

"Just £80 allows us to facilitate a two-hour support group, providing a safe environment where members of the LGBT community with a common issue can share concerns and support each other

"And just £45 means we can provide a meeting space for one of the LGBT-led community groups for two hours.

"Please support these vital services and be part of making a positive difference to the lives of LGBT people in Birmingham."

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- Twice monthly non-scene Gay & Bisexual Men's group
- UNIQUE - Young Persons (16-24 yrs) LGBTQ support

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Suite 3, 1st Floor, Lanchard House, Victoria Street, **West Bromwich** B70 8ER

info@shsl.org.uk / 01384 243 220

Acting Out: Birmingham's very own LGBT theatre group announces new committee

LGBT theatre group Acting Out have elected a new committee for 2015.

The Birmingham-based group, which meets weekly and puts on a wide variety of productions for the LGBT community are governed by an elected committee formed of current group members. Every year the group nominate their Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and three non-portfolio people who ensure operations run smoothly. The new committee, who were elected in mid January, are as follows:

Chair: Rachel Barnes

Secretary: Alexander Wrightson

Treasurer: Richard Wilkes

Non-portfolio: Dean Haycock (projects co-ordinator), Karen Patel (PR and website), Peter Davis (creative co-ordinator)

The new committee aims to implement a fresh approach to productions and also introduce training and workshops for members who would like to hone their theatre-relevant skills.

Newly elected Chair Rachel Barnes, who is the first ever female chair of Acting Out, said "I'm delighted to have been elected chair of



Acting Out. The new committee will work to introduce fresh ideas and encourage as many of our members as possible to get involved with all aspects of production. We will also strive to further enhance our reputation for putting on relevant, thought-provoking and fun theatre for the LGBT community."

Acting Out welcomes new members,

regardless of acting experience, all year round.

Meetings are held weekly at the Wellington Hotel, Bristol Street, Birmingham

For more information, contact acting_out@btinternet.com

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the over 40's meets every 2nd Saturday of the month at 1pm at 10 Norton Tower Contact on: sue@hotmail.co.uk

RUBY'S Mature Women's Group, Wolverhampton Tel: 01902 425092

RUBYFRUIT WOMEN Leicester based non-scene social group for lesbian, bisexual and questioning women of all ages. Wednesday nights from 7pm. Tel: 01532 156474

THE PINK LINK is a social space in Staffordshire for women with a different vision. Call: 01782 266996

WORCESTER LESBIAN GROUP Meets twice monthly @ me myself. Tel: 01902 425092

1ST DUT YOUTH GROUP

Leicester LGBT Centre, 15 Wellington Street Leicester. Call: Paul Foxon on 0116 254 7412

DERBYSHIRE LGBT Youth Forum. Tel: 01332 207704

GALAXY Group for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people aged 18 and under in Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire. Call: 0300 123 0870

HMIX Group for young LGBTQ people in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Call: 01952 224110

INSIDE OUT (Sandwell) A youth club for LGBT and questioning young people and their friends. Tel: 0845 352 1276

OUTBURST Nottingham Support group for LGBT young people. Tel: 0115 962 5040

OUT CENTRAL LGBT youth group for young people 13-19 who are LGBT or questioning their sexuality. Call: 07826 873458

OUT EAST Youth group based in Sutton Coldfield. Tel: 07795 611781

PRISM LGBTQ Support group for young people in Coventry

INFO@prismlgbtq.org **SHOUT** (Sandwell) An LGBT youth steering group which works towards giving LGBT young people a voice in Sandwell. Tel: 0845 352 1276

SPACE LGBT YOUTH GROUP A group for young people aged 13 to 21. Tel: 01543 411113

SPECTRUM - YOUNG LGBT **EXCHANGE** Leicester's Group offering opportunities for young LGBT people. Call: 0116 254 7412

UNIQUE Group for young LGBTQ people. Meet twice monthly on Sundays. Call Matt or Justin: 01384 243220

X2Y Group for young LGBT people in Wolverhampton. Every Saturday @ 11am. Tel: 01902 425092

LIVE AIDS

AMPLUS A Charity supporting people living with and affected by HIV. Call: 0121 622 6471

FRESHWINDS HOUSE Holistic care and support for people with life threatening illness. Tel: 0121 415 6670 (8 lines)

HEALTHY GAY LIFE - BIRMINGHAM Free confidential service working with Gay/Bisexual men to promote sexual, mental and social health and well-being. Tel: 0121 440 6161

LEICESTERSHIRE AIDS SUPPORT SERVICES Tel: 0116 255 9995

STAFFORDSHIRE BUDDIES Confidential help and support for people living with or affected by HIV. Tel: 01782 201251

SUMMIT HOUSE SUPPORT Practical Support and confidential advice around all HIV/AIDS related issues in the Dudley / Sandwell borough. Tel: 01384 243220

TERENCE HIGGINS TRUST Offer a range of services for those infected and affected by HIV and STIs Birmingham. 0121 694 6440

TELFORD 01952 224110

TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH Offers a range of confidential services advice and support for LGBT communities affected by HIV & STIs Leicester. Tel: 0116 254 1747

LGBT Helplines

COVENTRY & WARWICK SHIRE FRIEND Tel: 02476 714199

DERBYSHIRE LGBT SWITCHBOARD Tel: 01332 349333

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTEGRATED RESPONSE PROJECT Leicester. Tel: 0116 255 0004

GAYLIFE NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE Tel: 0300 123 0970

HATE CRIME NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE Talk to a Hate Crime officer in complete confidence Stoke area. Tel: 01782 266996 (Loelia Higgins)

LGB COUNSELLING SERVICE Free counselling service for all sorts of LGB related issues. Call: 01782 425969

LEICESTER LGBT HELP-LINE Tel: 0116 255 0667

LGBT AA MEETING West Midlands. 8pm every Sat. Summit House, Dudley Tel: 01384 243220

LGBT STAFFORDSHIRE Stoke on Trent & North Staffs Tel: 01782 266996

NOTTINGHAM LESBIAN & GAY SWITCHBOARD 0115 934 5485 or 01623 621515

RAINBOW SUPPORT, HEREFORDSHIRE free and confidential support Call: 07507 447834

TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH Offers counselling services and one to one support for LGB communities Leicester. Tel: 0116 254 1747

VICTIM SUPPORT Provides emotional support and practical help to anyone who has been a victim of crime. Tel: 0300 303 1977

Sexual Health

BIRMINGHAM LGBT TRUST Support Groups, Sexual Health Testing, Cate Community Groups Events and more. Tel: 0121 643 0621

THE BRIDGE CENTRE Shrewsbury. A free sexual health service for gay and Bisexual men. Tel: 01743 344474

WEST MIDLANDS LGBT health services in the West Tel: 0121 248 2500

DUDLEY GAY MEN'S PROJECT Free & Confidential support service for gay, bi-sexual and MSM men living in or around Dudley Call: Matt Barlow 07980 906895

HAWTHORNE HOUSE Sexual health testing also operates a Walk in Service every morning from 9.30am - 11.30am. Tel: 0121 424 3300 or 0121 424 2456

HEALTHY GAY LIFE Birmingham: Free confidential service working with Gay/Bisexual men to promote sexual, mental and social health and well-being. Call: 0121 440 6161

HEREFORD SEXUAL HEALTH CLINIC @ GAIL STREET Open Monday - Friday Call: 01432 376915 for appointments and walk in times

HIV FAST TEST Free 20 minute HIV testing in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Call: 01952 224110

HIV TESTING by appointment at Summit House, West Bromwich. Call: Matt Barlow on 01384 243220 or 0121 500 5205

KWIK PRICK Rapid HIV Testing. Leicester. Call: 0116 254 1747

LGBT SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE Free services for the LGBT community who work or reside in South Staffs Tel: 01543 411413

MEN ONLY Sexual Health Clinic at Heroes Health Club, Stourbridge. Call: Matt 07980 906895

MEN'S HIV FAST TEST CLINIC Free 20 minute testing in Nottingham. 1st Monday monthly. Call: Adrian on 0115 953 3081

OUTWOMEN'S A social support group for gay and bisexual men with mental health problems living in the Solihull borough. Call: 0121 742 4941

SANDWELL GAY & BI MEN'S SERVICE Sexual health and social support. Call: Matt Barlow 07980 906895

THE SANDWELL FRIEND Every 1st & last Wednesday of the month Held at The Gay Men's Drop-in. Call: 0300 123 0970

TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH Offers a range of confidential services for LGB&T individuals and support for HIV & STIs including testing services Leicester. Tel: 0116 254 1747

WALSALL GAY MEN'S HEALTH PROJECT Delivering health and social care services to the LGBT community. Tel: 01922 613141

WHITFALL STREET A sexual health clinic located in Birmingham city centre Tel: 0121 237 5700

WORCESTERSHIRE GAY MEN'S HEALTH PROJECT providing free, confidential advice & support. Tel: 01905 681751

Support Groups

Alplus Poz Gay Men's Group. Meets 1st Thursday monthly for information and support. Call: Peter on 07960 404926

ALCOHOL & DRUGS SMART Recovery SMART meetings in a friendly environment @ smartlgbt@yahoo.com

BIRMINGHAM PARENTS' SUPPORT GROUP Meets 1st Wednesday Bi-monthly in Solihull. Tel: Maureen on 0121 742 0230

BEAM (Black ethnic & Asian Minority) Social and Support Group in Leicester. Call: 0116 254 7412

IDENTITY & WARWICKSHIRE FRIEND gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans? Need to talk? Call: 02476 714199 Mon - Fri 7.30pm - 9pm

CHANGES Based in Wolverhampton. Call: Lisa on 07864240222 or Maria on 07542 450163

DOSTI South Asian men's support group. Leicester. Call: 0116 254 1747

GROUP ONE Derby based support group for LGBT people with a "G" 560284

HGL COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY Mental and sexual health, for lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and trans people with a choice of male or female

counsellors. Tel: 0121 446 1085 or 07976 919481

HGL MARRIED MEN'S GROUP Support and advice for married men. Call: 0121 440 6161

HIGH 5 GROUP An HIV awareness group for gay/bisexual men who are affected by HIV. Group provides Support, events, outlines. Leicester. Tel: 0116 254 1747

HIV MEN'S GROUP Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Call: 01952 224110

HOW WOMEN HELP Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. Call: 01952 224110

INFORMAL ONE TO ONE SUPPORT A service for young men, south Asian men and African Caribbean men. Tel: 0121 440 6161. Email: info@hgl.nhs.uk

LEICESTER LGBT CENTRE Host numerous support groups. Call: 0116 254 7412

LGBT ALCOHOL SUPPORT GROUP Offer support to anybody in the gay community who has alcohol related problems. Tel: Tony on 0121 440 6161 or 07760 195642

LGBT NETWORK Stoke on Trent & North Staffordshire. Tel: 01782 266996

LGBT NETWORK Wolverhampton. Holistic support for LGBT people in the Black Country. Tel: 01902 425092

LGBT COUNSELLING Wolverhampton. Tel: 01902 425092

LGBT PROFESSIONALS in Wolverhampton. Meets once a month. Tel: 01902 425092

MIND OUT Mental Health Support Group in Wolverhampton, 1st and 3rd Wednesday monthly. Tel: 01902 425092

NATURAL HEALING For emotional and physical health, Contact Alison - Lesbian Homeopath. Tel: 01902 688087

NEW ROAD PARENTS Bromsgrove and surrounding areas. Supporting parents of LGBT people. Meets bi-monthly on the 1st Wed. Tel: Margaret 01527 832492

OUTWOMEN'S A social support group for gay and bisexual men with mental health problems living in the Solihull borough. Call: 0121 742 4941

PINK PARENTS A social, networking group for all lesbian and gay parents and their children. E: pinkparents@virginmedia.com

RANK OUTSIDERS Support group for LGBT armed forces personnel past & present. Helpline 0870 740 7755

RAPE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROJECT BIRMINGHAM Free confidential counselling for LGBT survivors of sexual, domestic violence and hate crimes. Tel: 0121 643 0301

SANDWELL Gay & Bisexual Men's Drop-in Service. Every Friday. Tel: 01384 243220

SWANN Wyre Forest. Meets the first Wednesday monthly. For more details phone: Tel: 07842 070240

TIME OUT COUNSELLING Coventry. For all LGBT + people. Tel: 07936 511111

WORCESTER LGBT NETWORK Tel: 01905 429800

PINK PARENTS A social, networking group for all lesbian and gay parents and their children. E: pinkparents@virginmedia.com

RANK OUTSIDERS Support group for LGBT armed forces personnel past & present. Helpline 0870 740 7755

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TIME OUT COUNSELLING Coventry. For all LGBT + people. Tel: 07936 511111

WORCESTER LGBT NETWORK Tel: 01905 429800

Trans Support

LEICESTER BUTTERFLIES for info visit: facebook.com/groups/butterfliesleicester

OUTSKIRTS TRANS-GENDER SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP The West Midlands largest transgender social support group. Email: sally@outskirtsg.co.uk or visit: www.outskirtsg.co.uk

SANCTUARY Providing support and practical help. Tel: 01902 744424

SANCTUARY STAKE Support people who are Transsexual, Transvestite or Transgender in North Staffs. www.gaystoke.org.uk

TRANS SOUTH STAFFS Support and group for people who are Trans, Transvestite or Transgender. Tel: 01543 411413

TRANS SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP Meets every 1st and 3rd Monday monthly. Tel: 01902 425092



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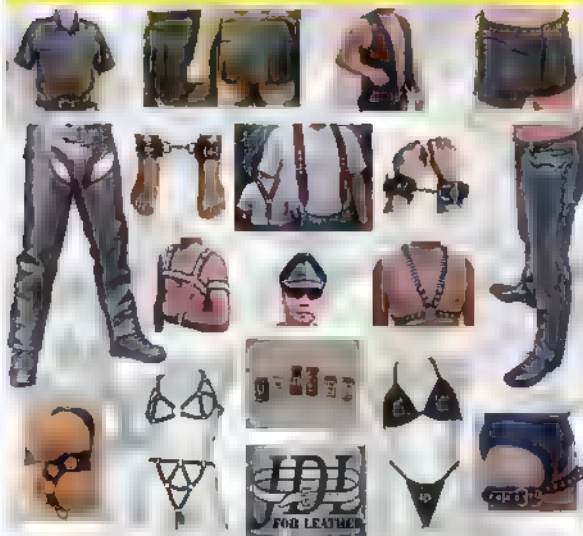
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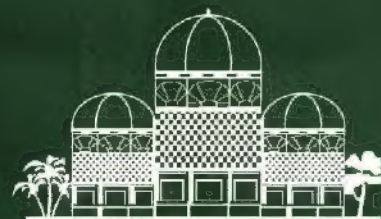
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THE GUDRUN LIMBRICK COLUMN

Summer lovin'

As I write this, it's raining more than just cats and dogs. There's a whole zoo of animals pouring down on us right now. And I'm typing with just my elbows, as I can't prise my frozen and desperate hands from my coffee mug. However, I am reliably informed (by my calendar) that summer is on its way! Yay!

My thoughts immediately turn to beach bodies - although I have to confess that mine is more of a beached body than a beach body...

I'm not a frequenter of saunas, communal changing rooms or those crazy solstice parties where people rip their clothes off and dance naked in the rain. Occasions where I am publicly naked, or nearly naked, are rarer than Rare McRare. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind being clothesless - I wouldn't mind skipping around in the altogether - but it would really need to be somewhere warm - like Hawaii - in a place with the central heating on full, with loads of people crushed around me to prevent ALL draughts.

You see, I don't like the cold.

I would like to do that whole 'Arctic explorer' thing, where you sew yourself into your clothes and your skin doesn't see the (cold) light of day until you're miles away from any snow. I haven't quite worked out how, once you're stitched into your triple-layered seal pelt, you do all those bottom-related activities such as toileting and sex (and scratching), but I'm sure it would be okay. But it will be fine. Don't we have She-Wees now (other brands of plastic penis substitute are, I'm almost sure, available)?

So summer can't come soon enough. I can figuratively tear off my sewn-on clothes, get on a

beach, strip down to my smalls and prance about. The bikini is a relatively recent invention (it's not so long ago that swimwear had to cover the ankles as well as everything else). It gives a shred of decency while still affording you the possibility of an all-over tan (without having to resort to a spray gun).

Men, of course, fare better - they can get away with just a budgie smuggler (and thank heavens for that!) while women are still attempting to squeeze themselves into three (ever-decreasing) triangles.

Bikinis are one item of clothing where 'fit' isn't really an essential feature. In fact, the smaller those three triangles in comparison to actual body size, the better for some people. Just about covering your necessities? Well, a bit of hoicking and waxing and you can probably go down to a smaller size.

Just as mobile phones have got smaller and smaller over time, so bikinis are going the same way. No doubt mobiles will soon be but an implant in our ear. I suspect that bikinis will soon be just a virtual decency implant - a suggestion of modesty that doesn't actually exist. Complete female beach nudity is surely just around the corner.

Mind you, as soon as the sun goes in, I shall be straight back in those seal pelts.



ON THE BALL with Steve Ball

Beach bodies

It's Carnival time in Rio and I love being here. This is my fifth visit in the last ten years and the beautiful weather, golden beaches, samba music and fun of carnival continue to amaze me.

I've really looked forward to this holiday and escaping the gloom of an English February. But if my last visit three years ago is anything to go by, it would give Tom Daley an inferiority complex.

It's not that I'm ashamed of my body, but I'm not as gym-toned as I used to be and my waistline is catching up with my age. So imagine my relief when my Brazilian mates took me to the beach. The guys are still stunning, but the body fascism that dominated so much of the gay beach and club scene seems to have declined.

I'm not advocating sloth,

just saying that some of us gay men are too concerned with how we look rather than who we really are.

Research shows that gay men are more dissatisfied with their bodies than lesbians, straight men or straight women. Maybe it's because some of us spend too much time in locations - bars and gyms, for example - that place a high premium on physical appearance.

Perhaps we all need to appreciate body types in all shapes and sizes, and learn to value the person inside. I know that I'm happier for it.



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Ryan Humphreys - ryan@midlandszone.co.uk -

with a short introduction and examples of some previous work, along with a couple of ideas of what you'd be keen to write about.

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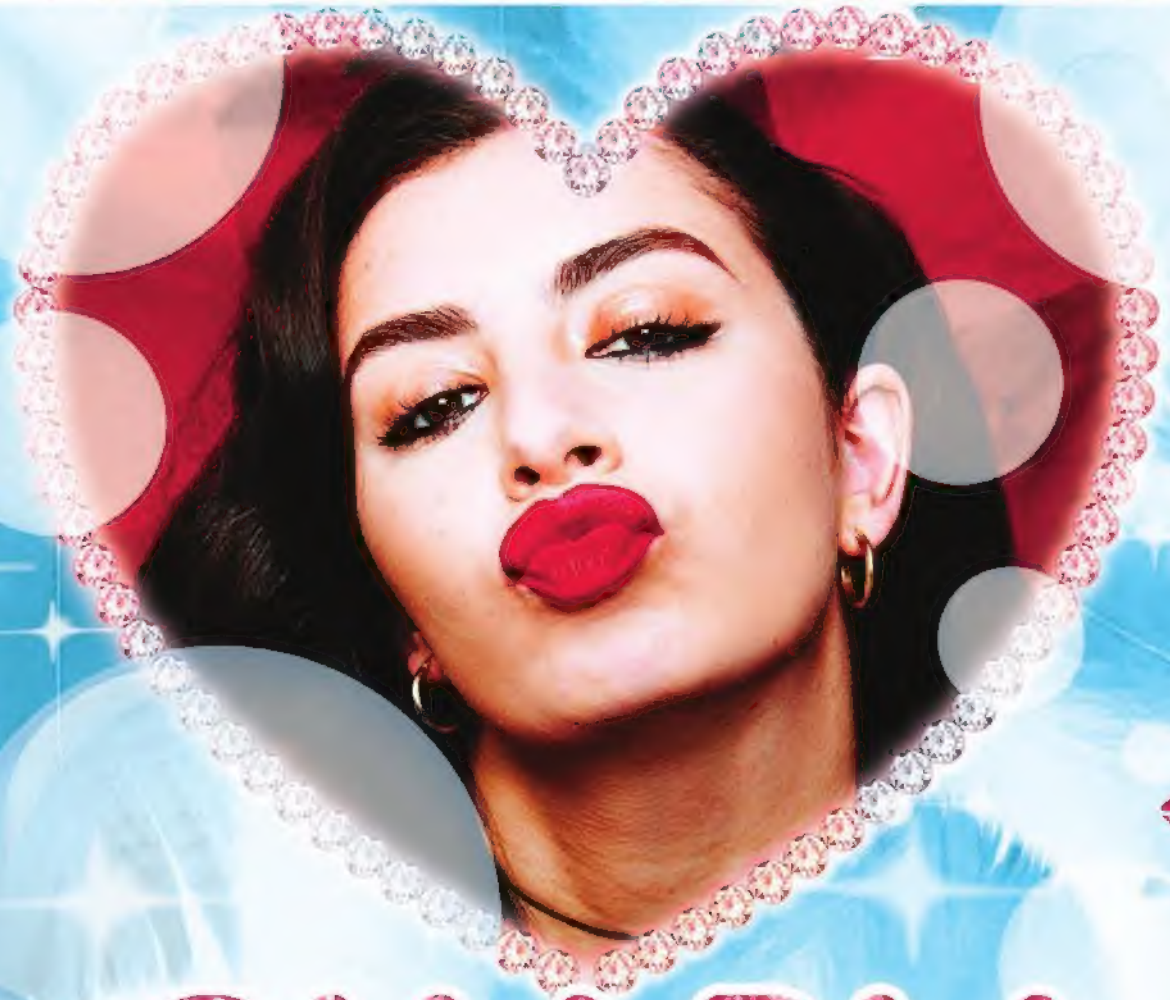
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